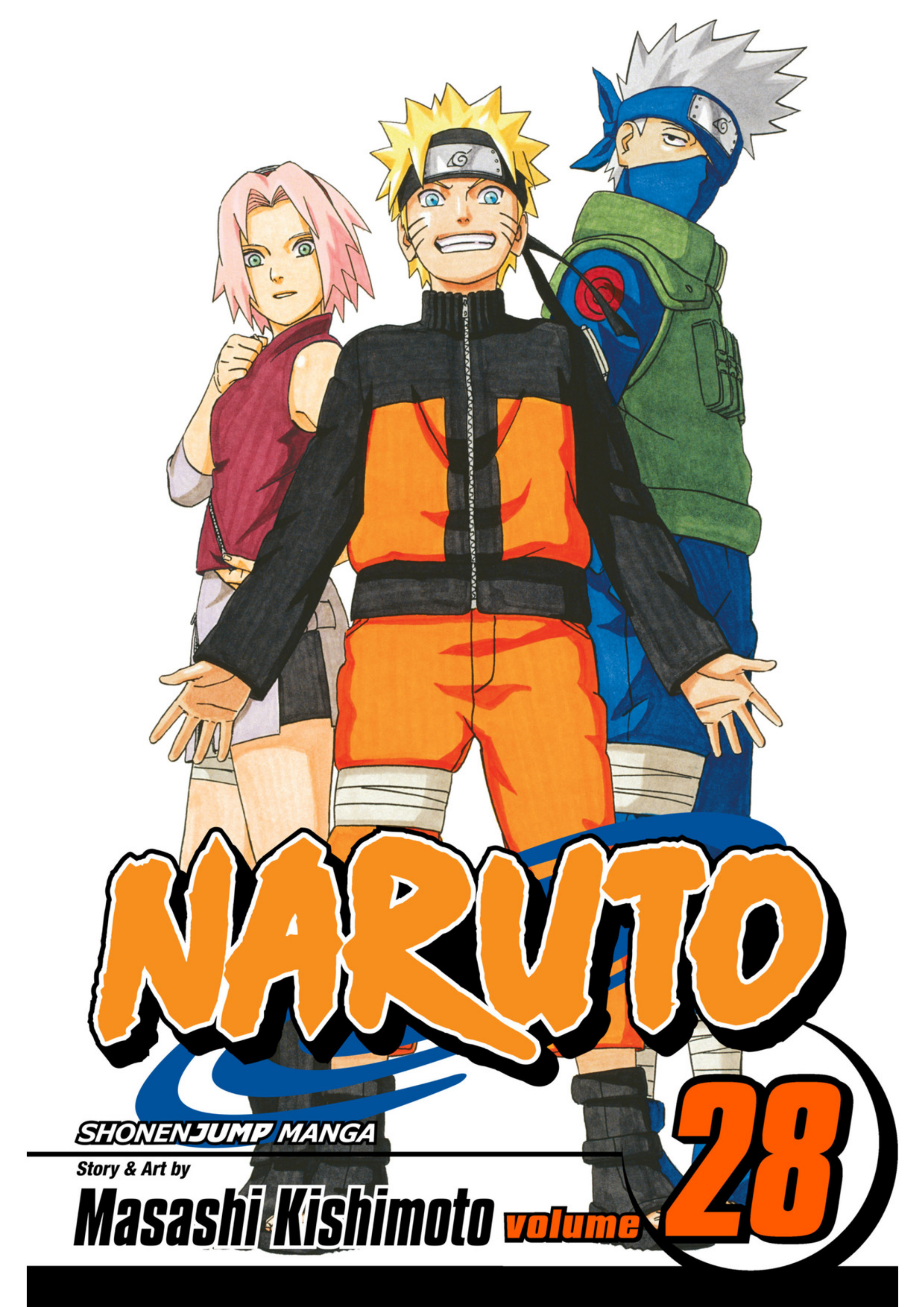

NARUTO
SHONENJUMP MANGA
Story & Art by
Masashi Kishimoto
volume 28

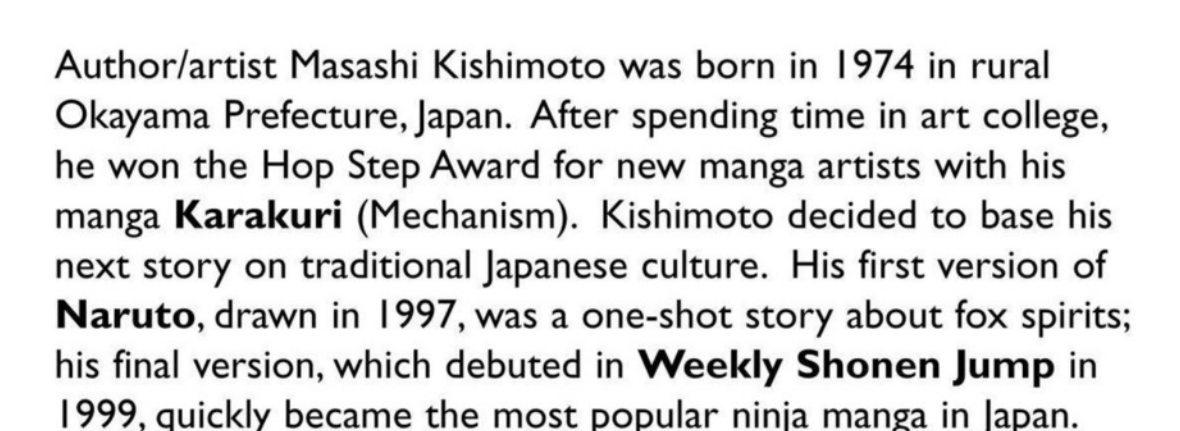




岸本斉史

Uh... Oh! Right! I wanted to let you all know that with this volume begins Part Two, so I look forward to your patronage. To those who have not yet read Part One, please read from volume 1. Then again, feel free to read it from the middle as well... (laughs).

*—Masashi Kishimoto, 2005*



Author/artist Masashi Kishimoto was born in 1974 in rural Okayama Prefecture, Japan. After spending time in art college, he won the Hop Step Award for new manga artists with his manga **Karakuri** (Mechanism). Kishimoto decided to base his next story on traditional Japanese culture. His first version of **Naruto**, drawn in 1997, was a one-shot story about fox spirits; his final version, which debuted in **Weekly Shonen Jump** in 1999, quickly became the most popular ninja manga in Japan.

**NARUTO VOL. 28**
**SHONEN JUMP Manga Edition**

This graphic novel contains material that was originally published in English in **SHONEN JUMP** #61–62. Artwork in the magazine may have been slightly altered from that presented here.

STORY AND ART BY MASASHI KISHIMOTO

Translation/Mari Morimoto
English Adaptation/Deric A. Hughes & Benjamin Raab
Touch-up Art & Lettering/Mark McMurray & Inori Fukuda Trant
Design/Sean Lee
Editor/Joel Enos



Some artwork has been modified from the original Japanese edition.



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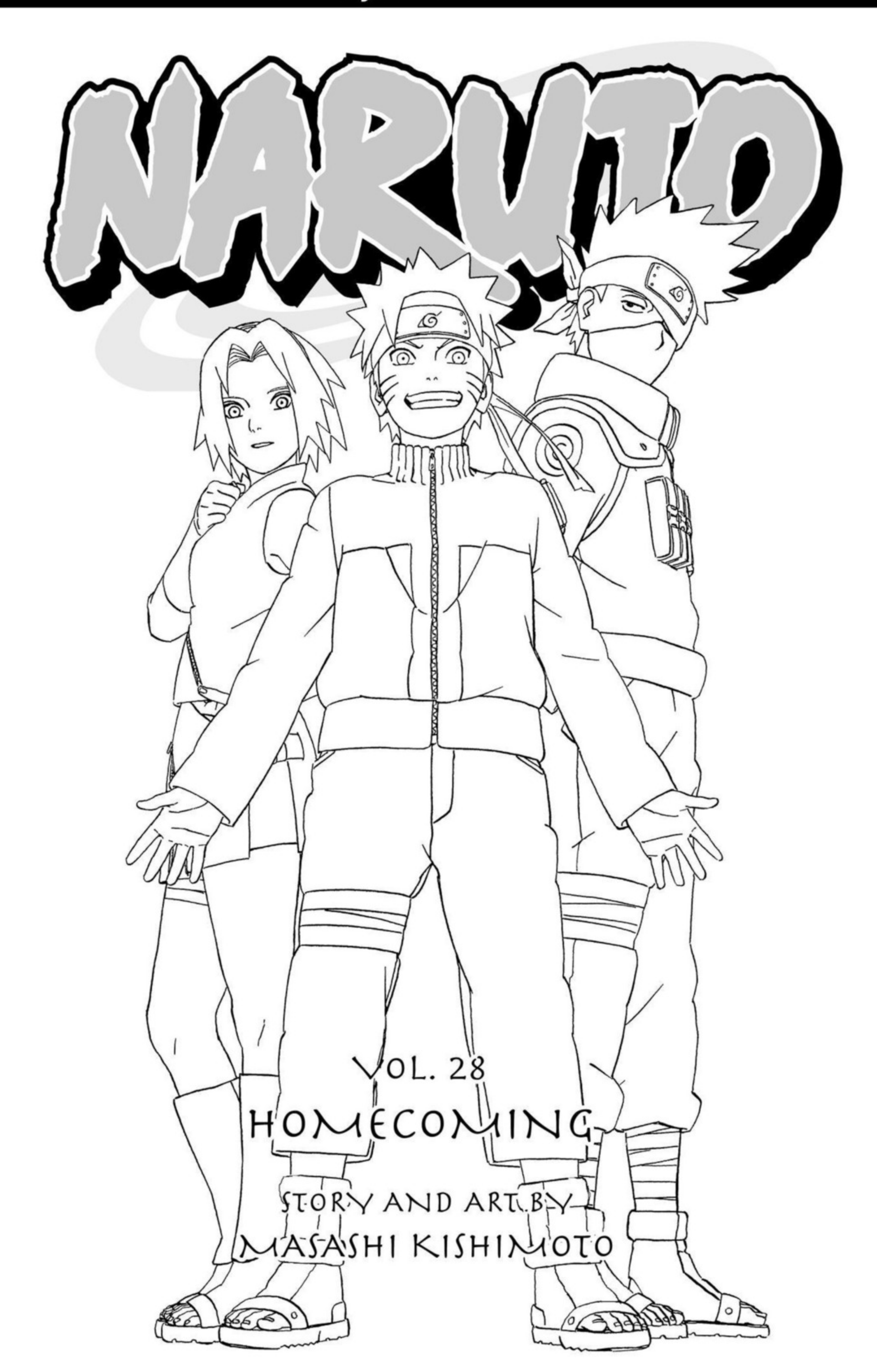




**PARENTAL ADVISORY**
NARUTO is rated T for Teen and is recommended for ages 13 and up. This volume contains realistic and fantasy violence.
ratings.viz.com



SHONEN JUMP MANGA EDITION




VOL. 28

HOMECOMING

STORY AND ART BY

MASASHI KISHIMOTO












## The Story So Far...

Twelve years ago a destructive nine-tailed fox spirit attacked the ninja village of Konohagakure. The Hokage, or village champion, defeated the fox by sealing its soul into the body of a baby boy. Now that boy, Uzumaki Naruto, has grown up to be a ninja-in-training, learning the art of ninjutsu with his teammates Sakura and Sasuke. During the Second Chûnin Exam, Orochimaru, a former student of the Third Hokage, attacks Naruto and the others. He leaves a curse mark upon Sasuke and then vanishes.

During the Third Exam, Orochimaru and company return to launch *Operation Destroy Konoha*, a campaign that ends with the sacrifice of Lord Hokage's life. Following the fierce battle against Orochimaru and Kabuto, Lady Tsunade then becomes the Fifth Hokage.

In the wake of the battle, Konoha suffers yet another loss when Sasuke, tempted by Orochimaru's offer of power, leaves with the Sound Ninja Four. Desperate to save his friend, Naruto enters into a bitter fight with Sasuke, but is ultimately unable to stop him. Amid movement by both Orochimaru and the mysterious organization the Akatsuki, Naruto and the others begin further training!!

## CHARACTERS

Sakura
春野サクラ

Naruto
ナルト

Tsunade
綱手

Jiraiya
自来也

Kakashi
カカシ

Sasuke
うちはサスケ



# NARUTO

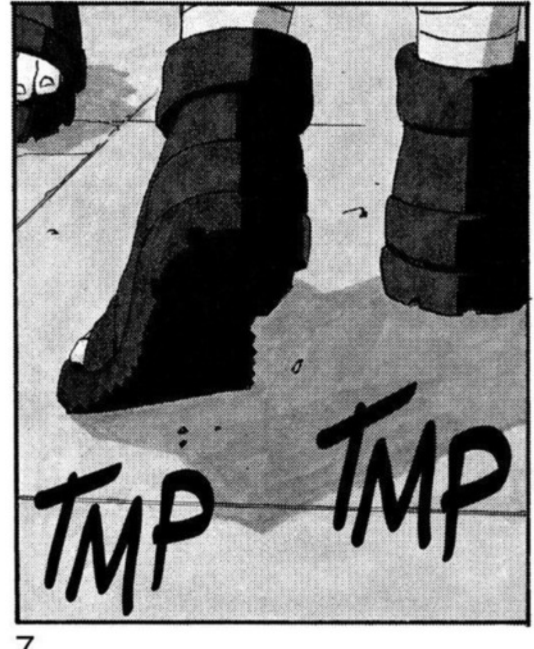
## VOL. 28
## HOMECOMING

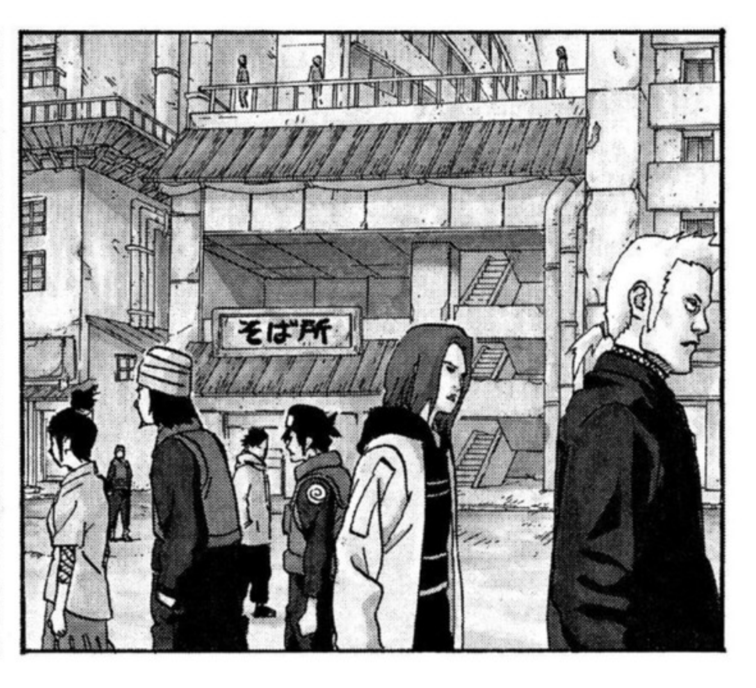
## CONTENTS

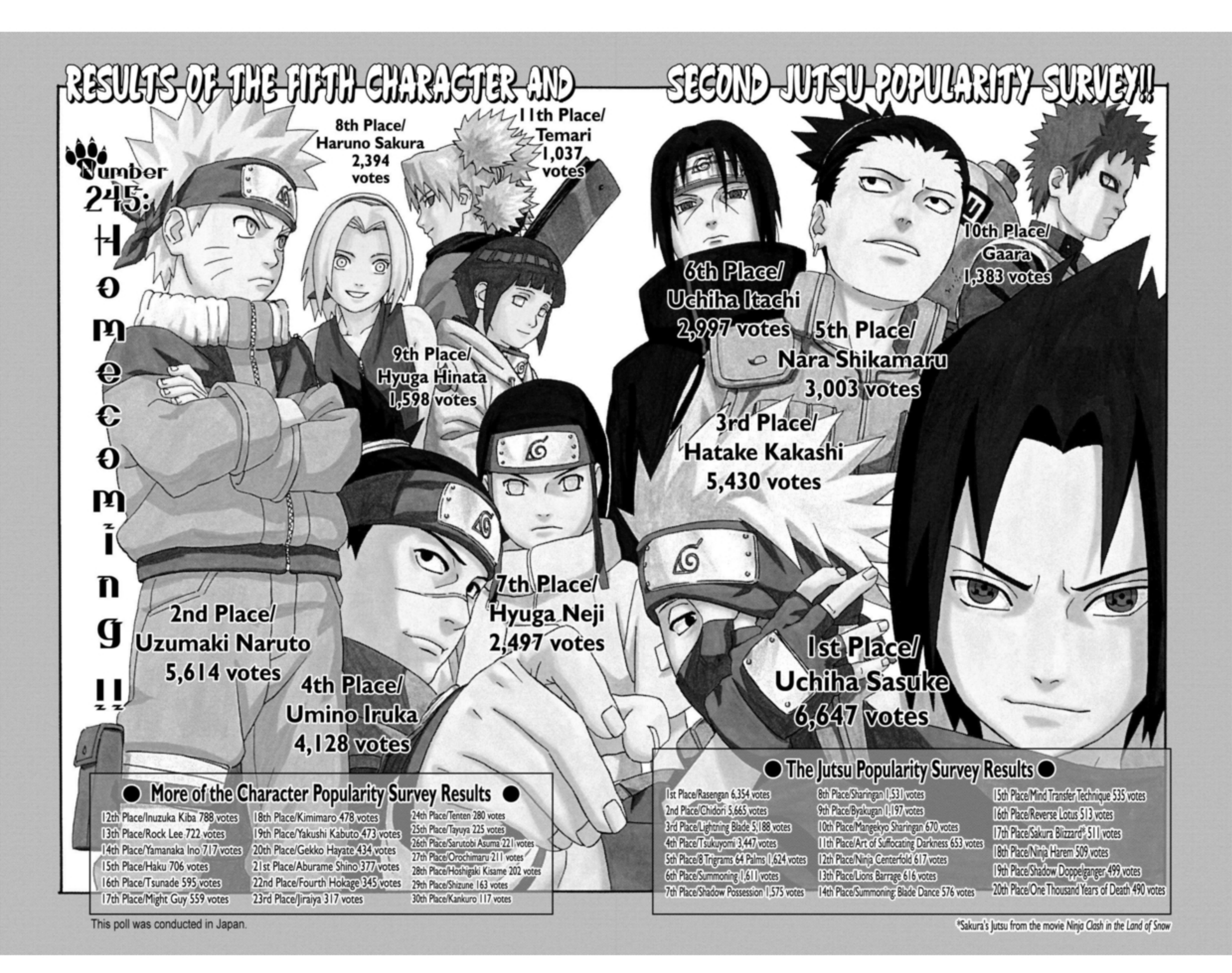


# Number 245: Homecoming!!



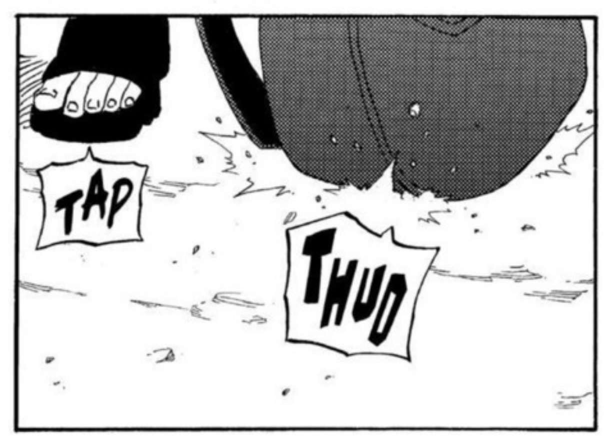


RESULTS OF THE FIFTH CHARACTER AND SECOND JUTSU POPULARITY SURVEY!!
Number 245: Homecoming!!
8th Place/ Haruno Sakura 2,394 votes
11th Place/ Temari 1,037 votes
6th Place/ Uchiha Itachi 2,997 votes
10th Place/ Gaara 1,383 votes
5th Place/ Nara Shikamaru 3,003 votes
9th Place/ Hyuga Hinata 1,598 votes
3rd Place/ Hatake Kakashi 5,430 votes
7th Place/ Hyuga Neji 2,497 votes
2nd Place/ Uzumaki Naruto 5,614 votes
4th Place/ Umino Iruka 4,128 votes
1st Place/ Uchiha Sasuke 6,647 votes
● More of the Character Popularity Survey Results ●
12th Place/Inuzuka Kiba 788 votes
13th Place/Rock Lee 722 votes
14th Place/Yamanaka Ino 717 votes
15th Place/Haku 706 votes
16th Place/Tsunade 595 votes
17th Place/Might Guy 559 votes
18th Place/Kimimaro 478 votes
19th Place/Yakushi Kabuto 473 votes
20th Place/Gekko Hayate 434 votes
21st Place/Aburame Shino 377 votes
22nd Place/Fourth Hokage 345 votes
23rd Place/Jiraiya 317 votes
24th Place/Tenten 280 votes
25th Place/Tayuya 225 votes
26th Place/Sarutobi Asuma 221 votes
27th Place/Orochimaru 211 votes
28th Place/Hoshigaki Kisame 202 votes
29th Place/Shizune 163 votes
30th Place/Kankuro 117 votes
● The Jutsu Popularity Survey Results ●
1st Place/Rasengan 6,354 votes
2nd Place/Chidori 5,665 votes
3rd Place/Lightning Blade 5,188 votes
4th Place/Tsukuyomi 3,447 votes
5th Place/8 Trigrams 64 Palms 1,624 votes
6th Place/Summoning 1,611 votes
7th Place/Shadow Possession 1,575 votes
8th Place/Sharingan 1,531 votes
9th Place/Byakugan 1,197 votes
10th Place/Mangekyo Sharingan 670 votes
11th Place/Art of Suffocating Darkness 653 votes
12th Place/Ninja Centerfold 617 votes
13th Place/Lions Barrage 616 votes
14th Place/Summoning: Blade Dance 576 votes
15th Place/Mind Transfer Technique 535 votes
16th Place/Reverse Lotus 513 votes
17th Place/Sakura Blizzard* 511 votes
18th Place/Ninja Harem 509 votes
19th Place/Shadow Doppelganger 499 votes
20th Place/One Thousand Years of Death 490 votes
This poll was conducted in Japan.
*Sakura's Jutsu from the movie Ninja Clash in the Land of Snow


NARUTO
-ナルト-



READ THIS WAY





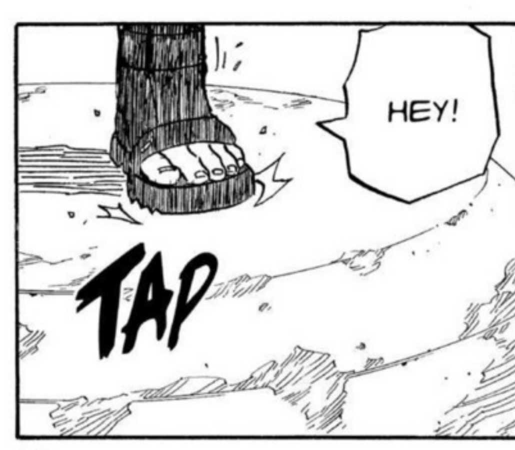


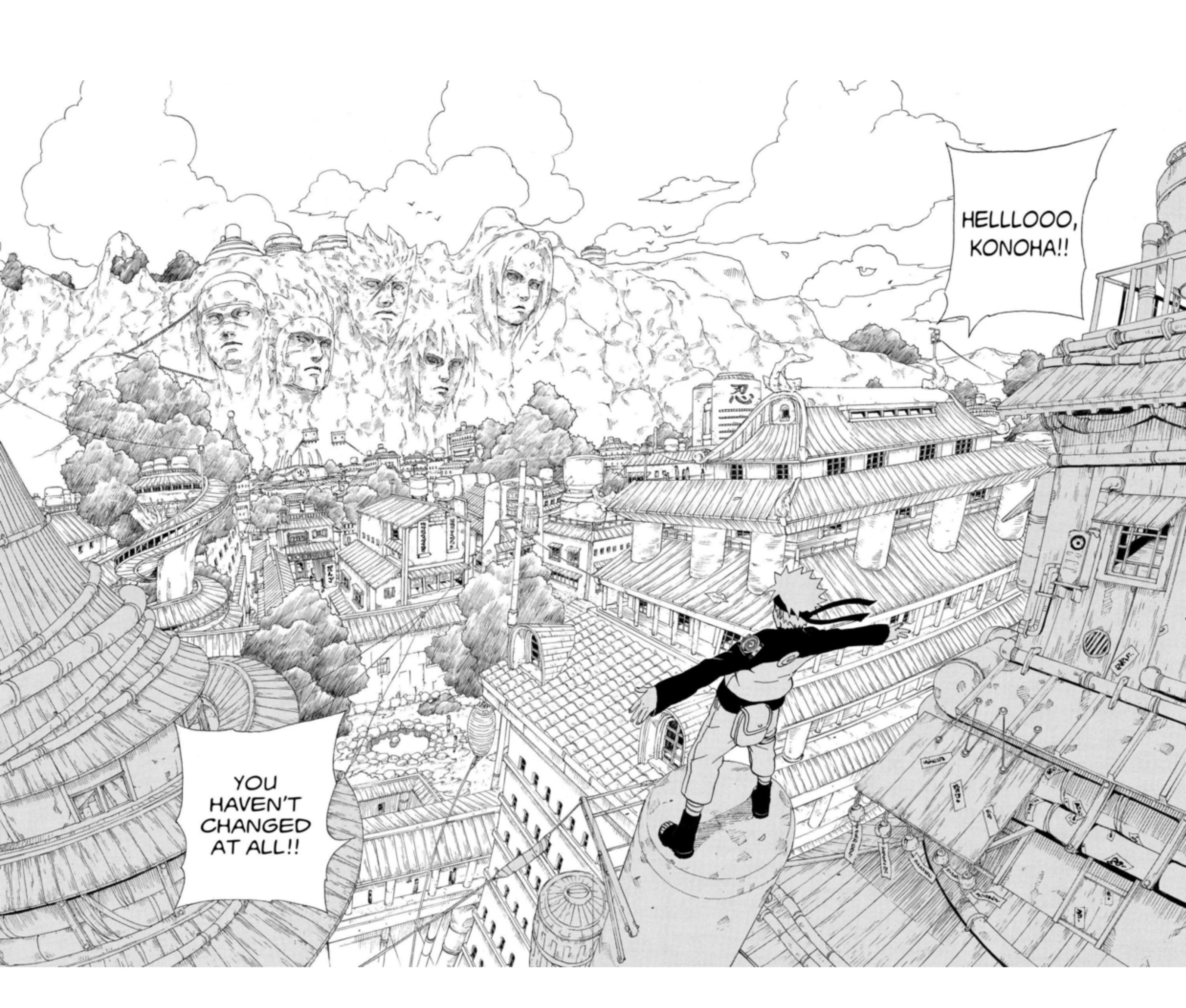








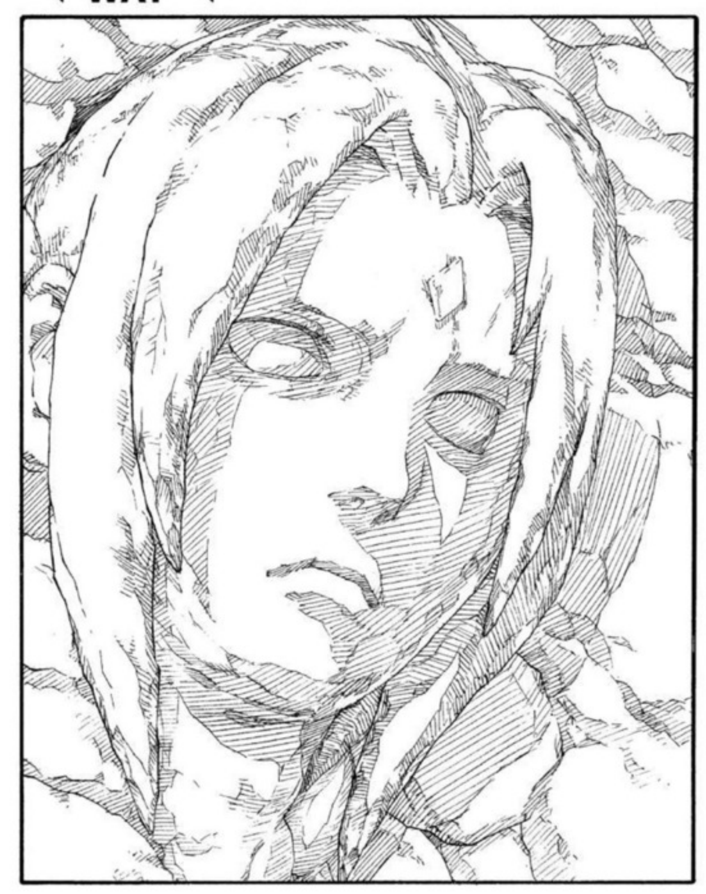



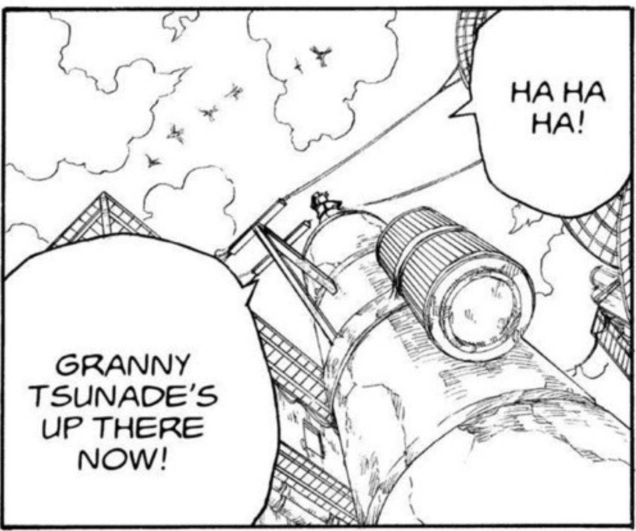

HELLLOOO, KONOHA!!
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL!!

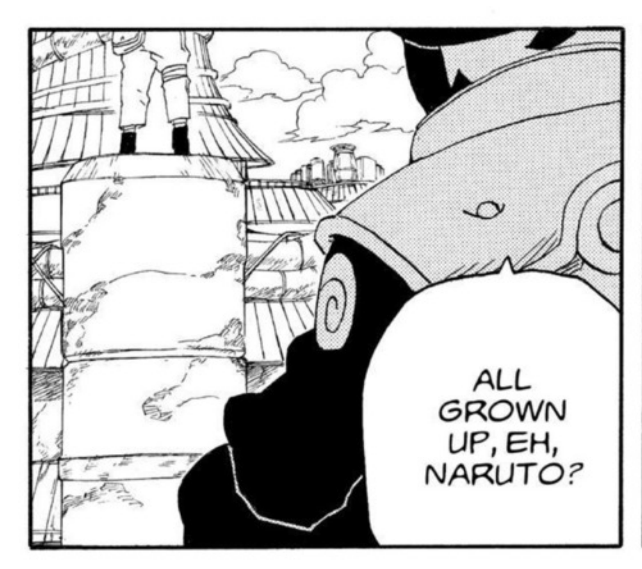

YEAH!!


READ THIS WAY


HUNH?!




HA HA HA!
GRANNY TSUNADE'S UP THERE NOW!


ALL GROWN UP, EH, NARUTO?


!


...!

MAKE-OUT VIOLENCE

YO!









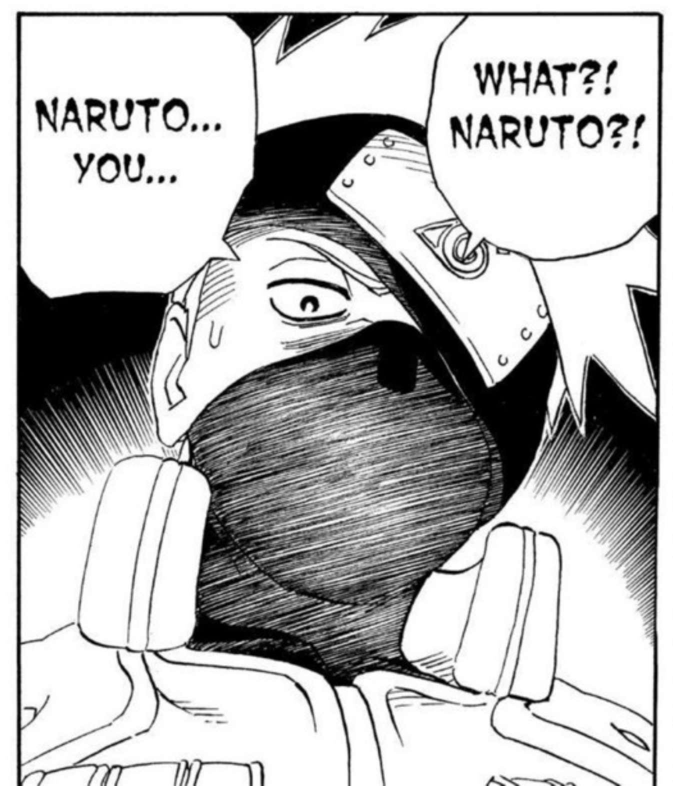

READ
THIS
WAY


I HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU!
SHLOOF
?


SAKURA...

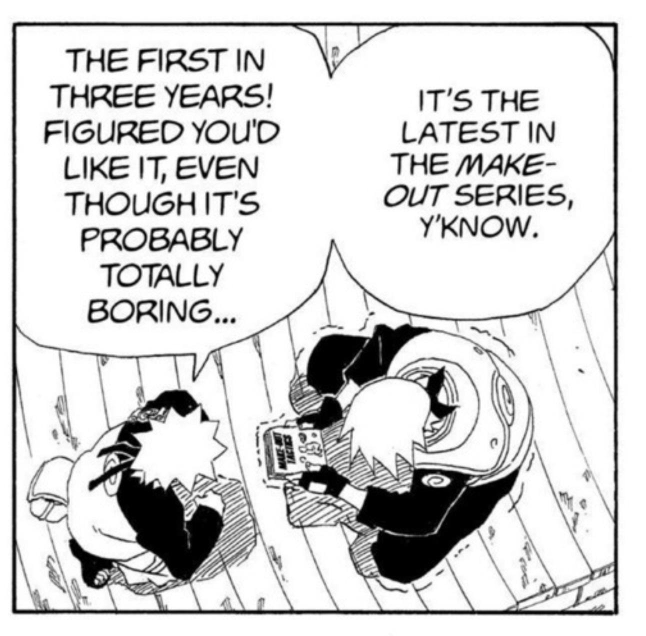

YES, MILADY?
KLAK
KLAK

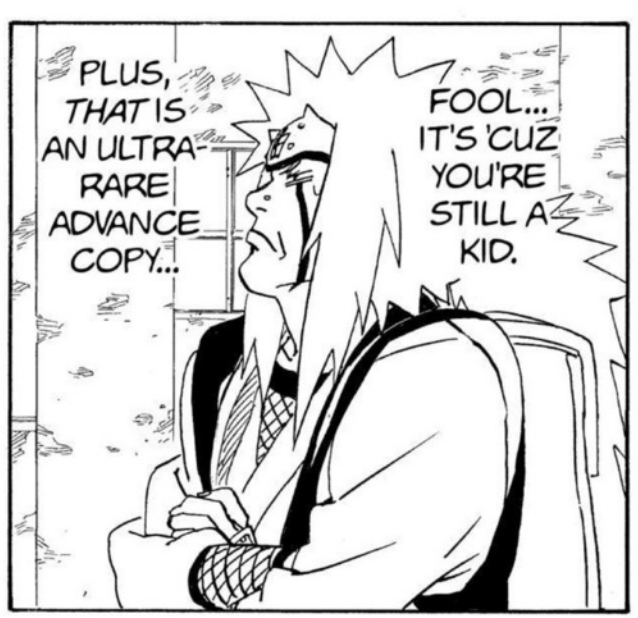

THAT BRAT...
...NARUTO HAS RE-TURNED!

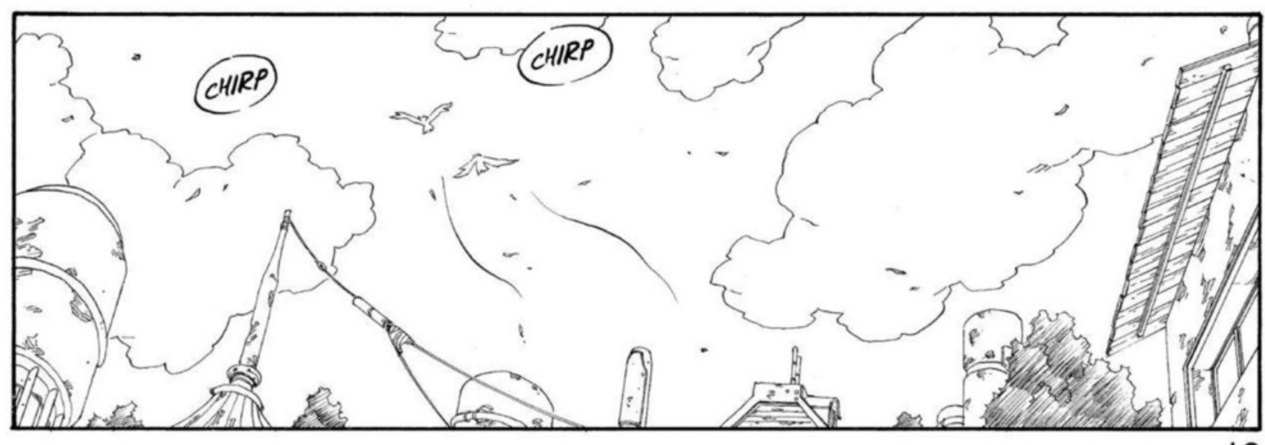

WHAT?! NARUTO?!
NARUTO... YOU...

MAKE-OUT TACTICS

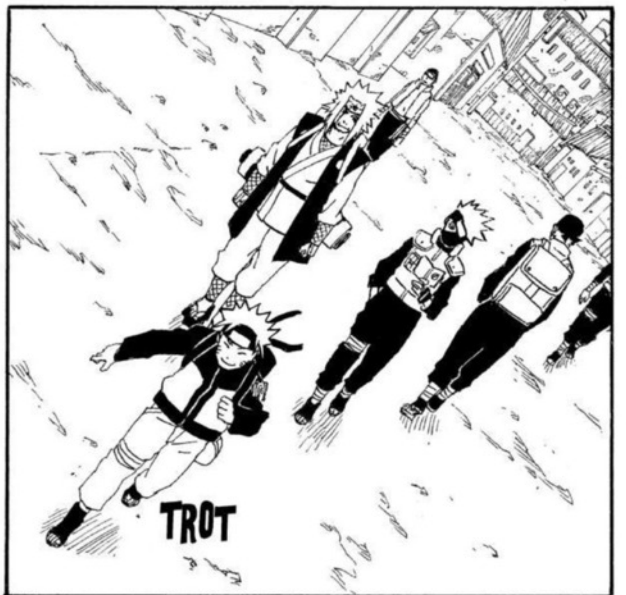
MAKE-OUT TACTICS



READ THIS WAY













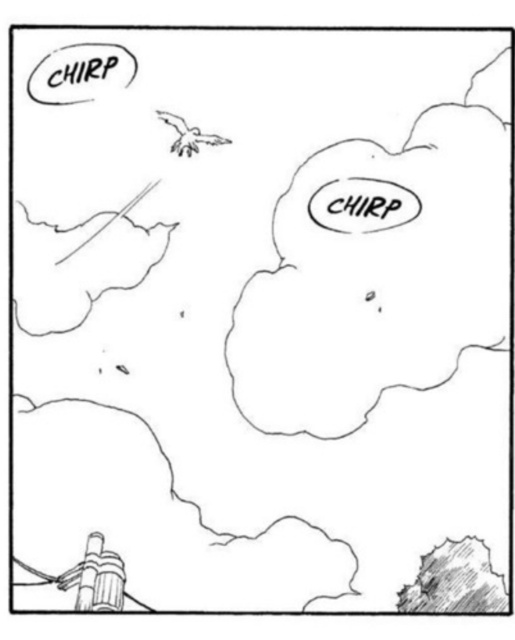


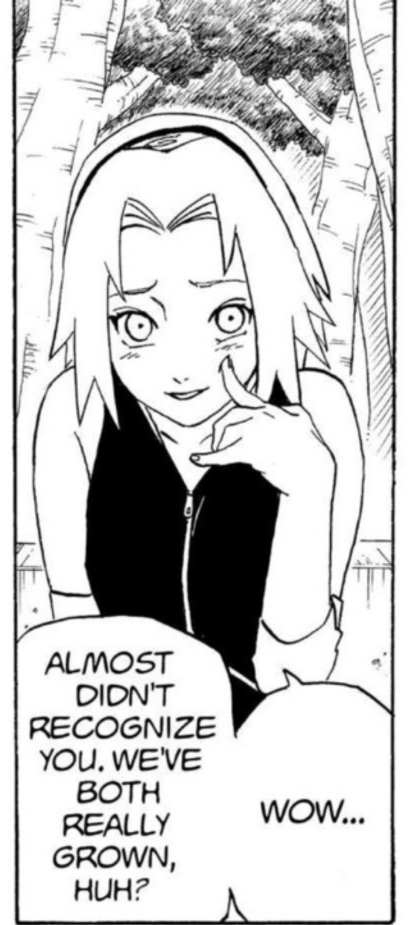



!


S... SAKURA?


!!
HUH? NARUTO?!

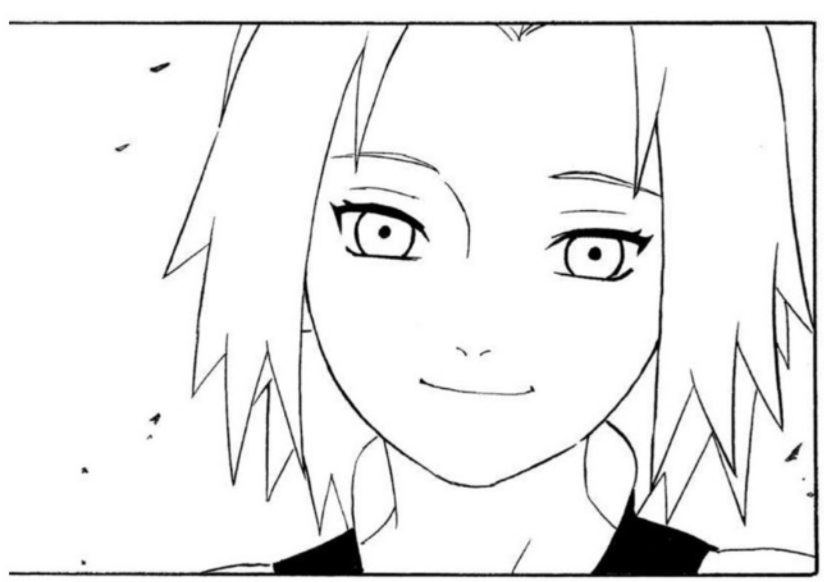

CHIRP
CHIRP


WOW...
ALMOST DIDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU. WE'VE BOTH REALLY GROWN, HUH?


GRIN
IF YOU SAY SO! YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL!


SMOOTH, KID...COULD YOU BE ANY MORE OBLIVIOUS?
?

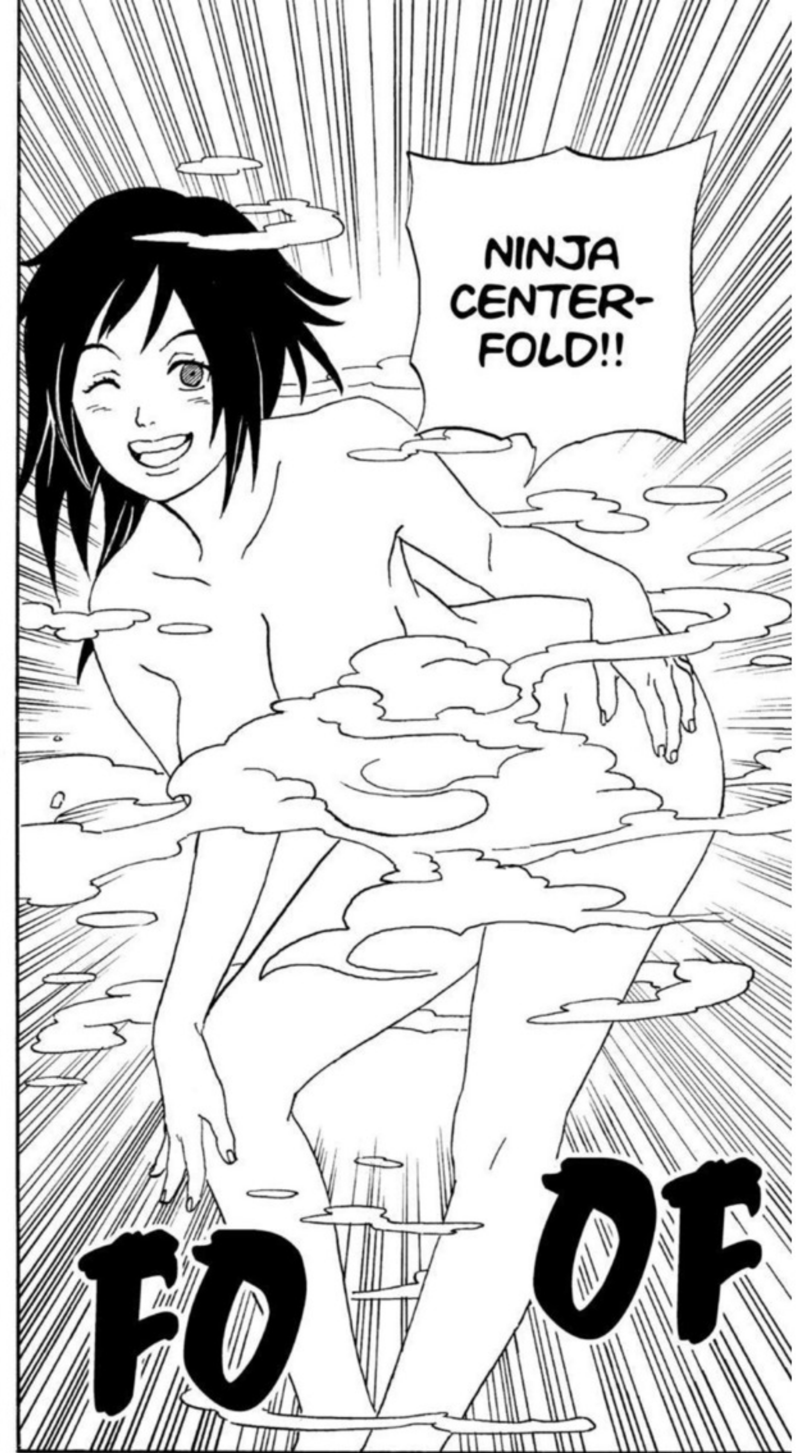

!
WELL, MAYBE YOU'RE JUST TALLER THAN I REMEMBER...
HUH...?




...TALLER... AND... WELL...

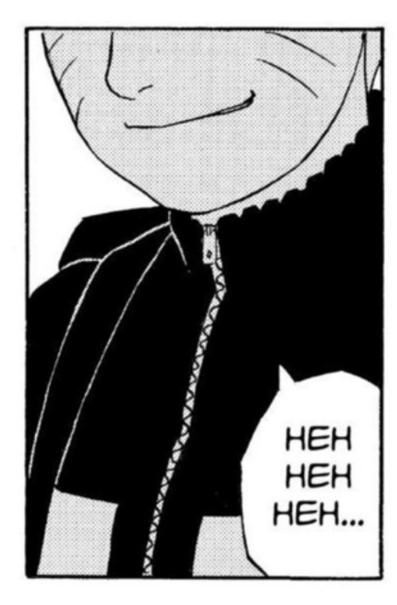

NARUTO BIG BRO! CHECK IT OUT!
!


...
!
...
WHOA !!
...


NINJA CENTER-FOLD!!
FO OF


FOF F


WHAT DO YOU THINK?!
I GOT THE *BOING-FWHHT-BOING* PART DOWN NOW, EH?

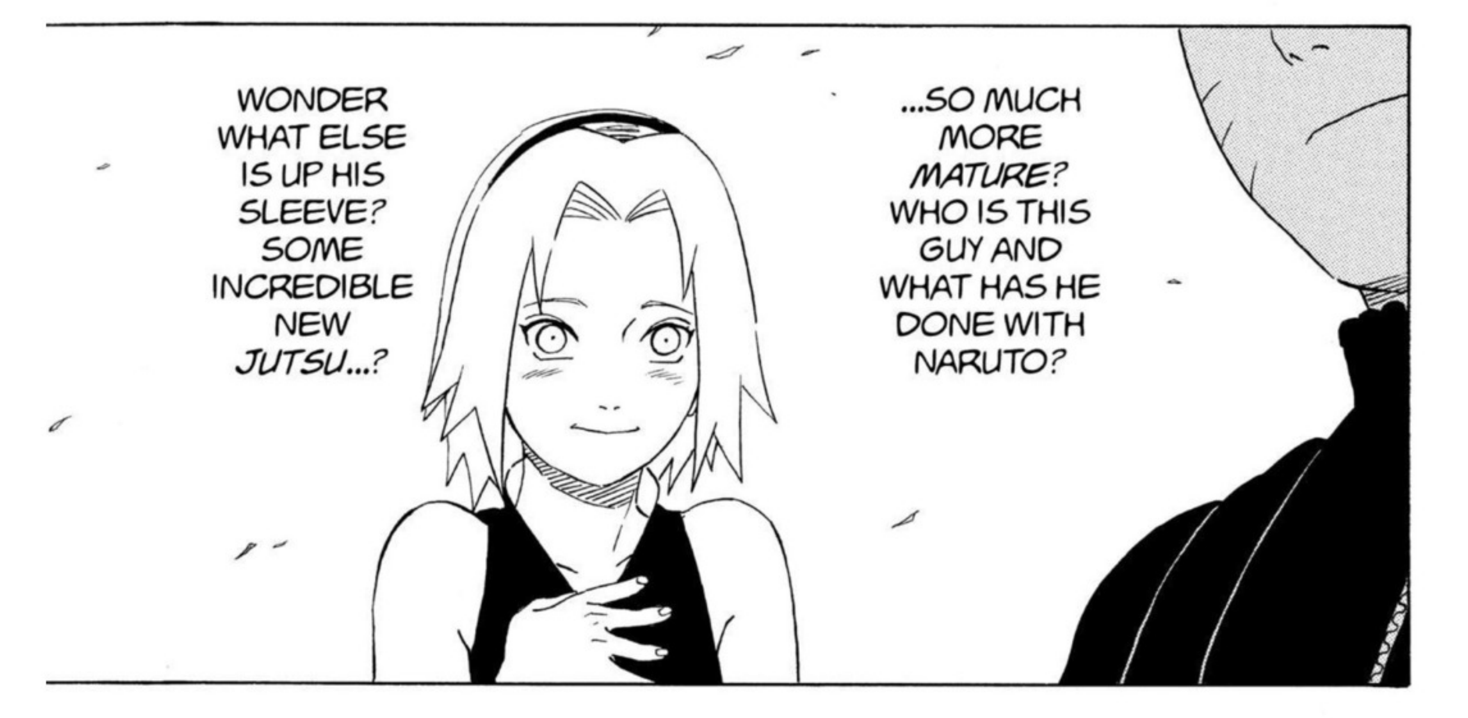

HEH HEH HEH...


READ
THIS
WAY


!


KONOHAMARU, I'M NOT A KID ANYMORE.
YOU GOTTA WORK ON OTHER JUTSU TOO, Y'KNOW.

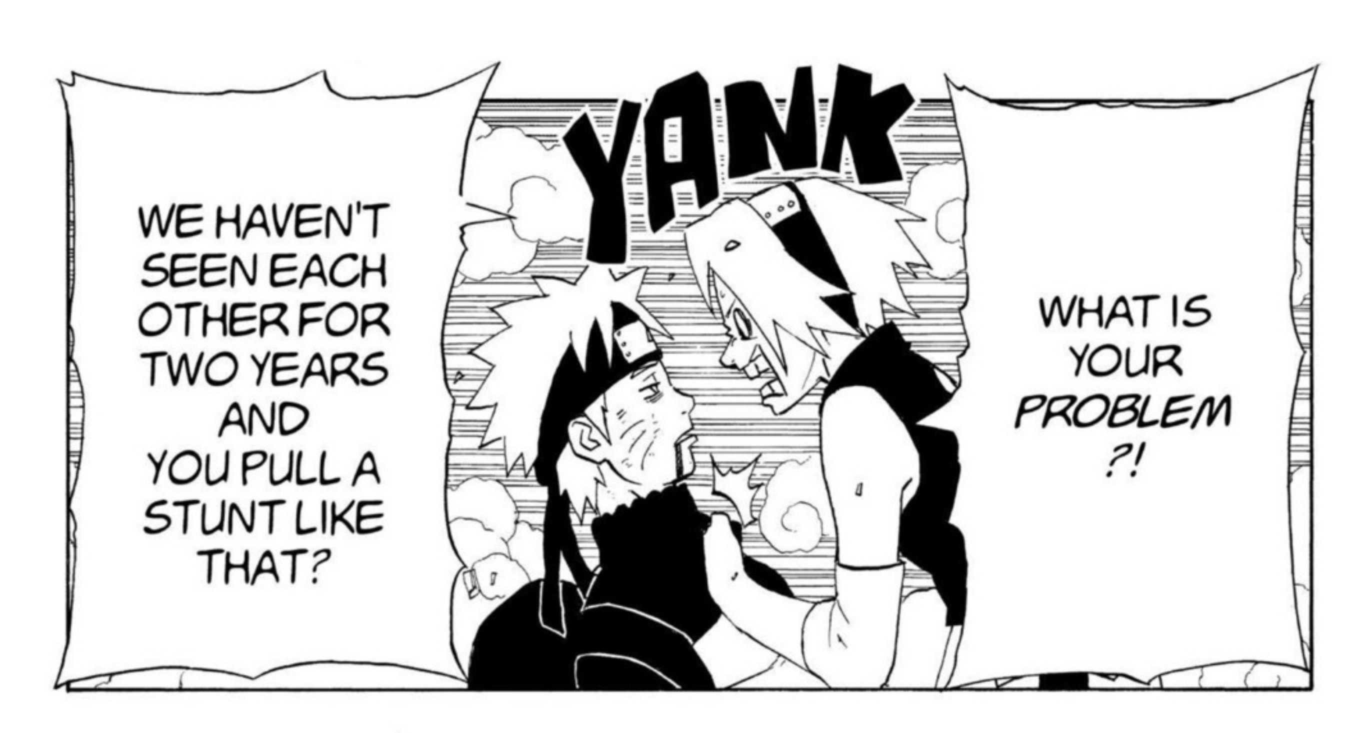

...


...SO MUCH MORE *MATURE*? WHO IS THIS GUY AND WHAT HAS HE DONE WITH NARUTO?
WONDER WHAT ELSE IS UP HIS SLEEVE? SOME INCREDIBLE NEW *JUTSU*...?


THAT JUTSU IS TOTALLY BORING, KONOHAMARU!
NOW WATCH THIS! MY NEW PERVY NINJUTSU INVENTION!! HERE IT GOES!!

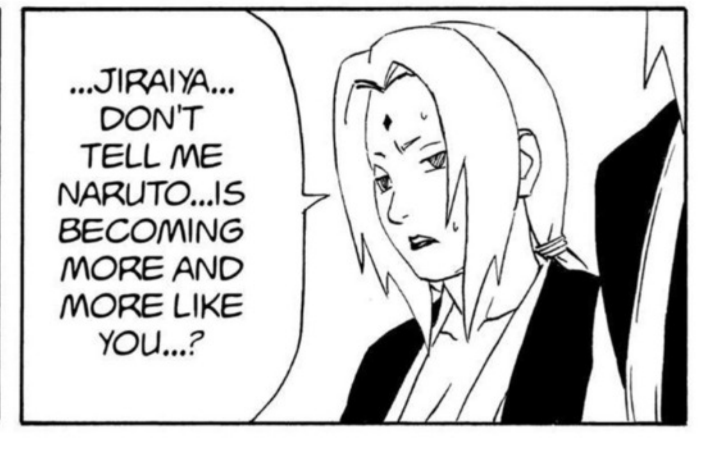

NEW PERVY NINJUTSU ...?


DOKOOM
...ARE YOU
KID-DING ME ?!?
FWH OOSH
...
...
HUH?
...


WHAT IS YOUR PROBLEM ?!
YANK
WE HAVEN'T SEEN EACH OTHER FOR TWO YEARS AND YOU PULL A STUNT LIKE THAT?


DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW THAT MAKES ME FEEL?! HUH?!
DO YOU ?!?
AND I WAS THINKING YOU WERE SO GROWN UP!
SHOOKA SHOOKA


NOW, NOW, SAKURA, CALM DOWN...
YOU'RE SCARING KONOHA-MARU...


...JIRAIYA... DON'T TELL ME NARUTO...IS BECOMING MORE AND MORE LIKE YOU...?


THAT HOT, QUICK TEMPER AND MONSTER STRENGTH ...
...YOU'VE RAISED YOUR OWN TSUNADE JUNIOR, TOO...!

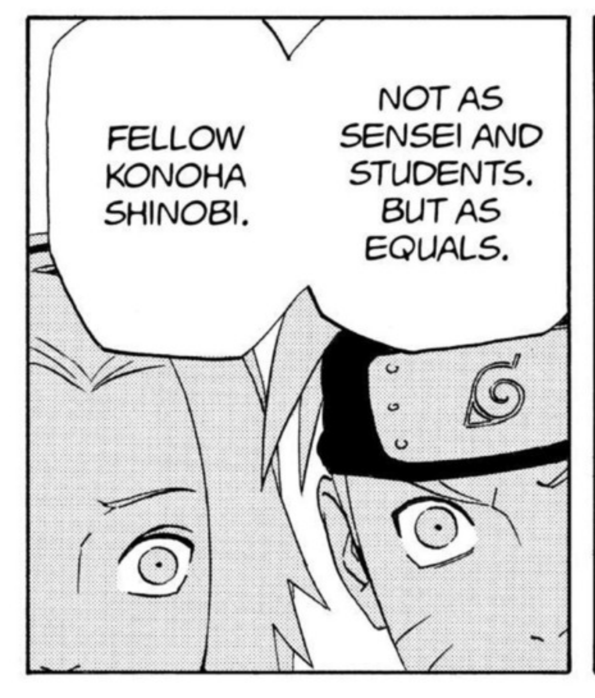

...ALL RIGHT!
ENOUGH WITH THE EMOTIONAL REUNION.
KAKASHI.


CLOMP


WOW, IT SURE HAS BEEN A WHILE.

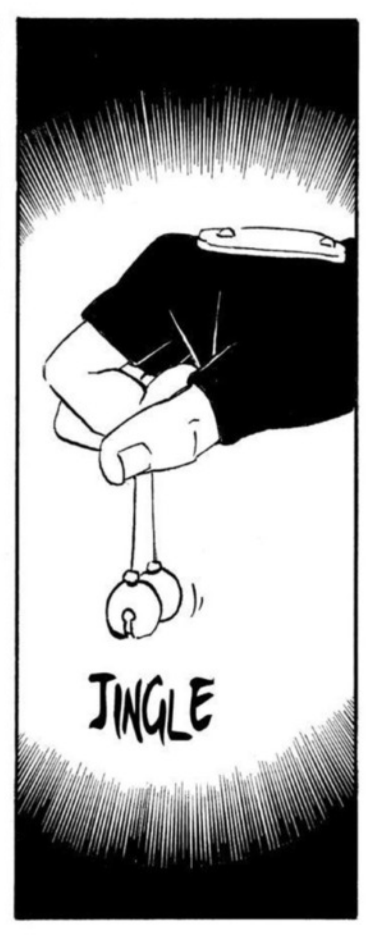

...!

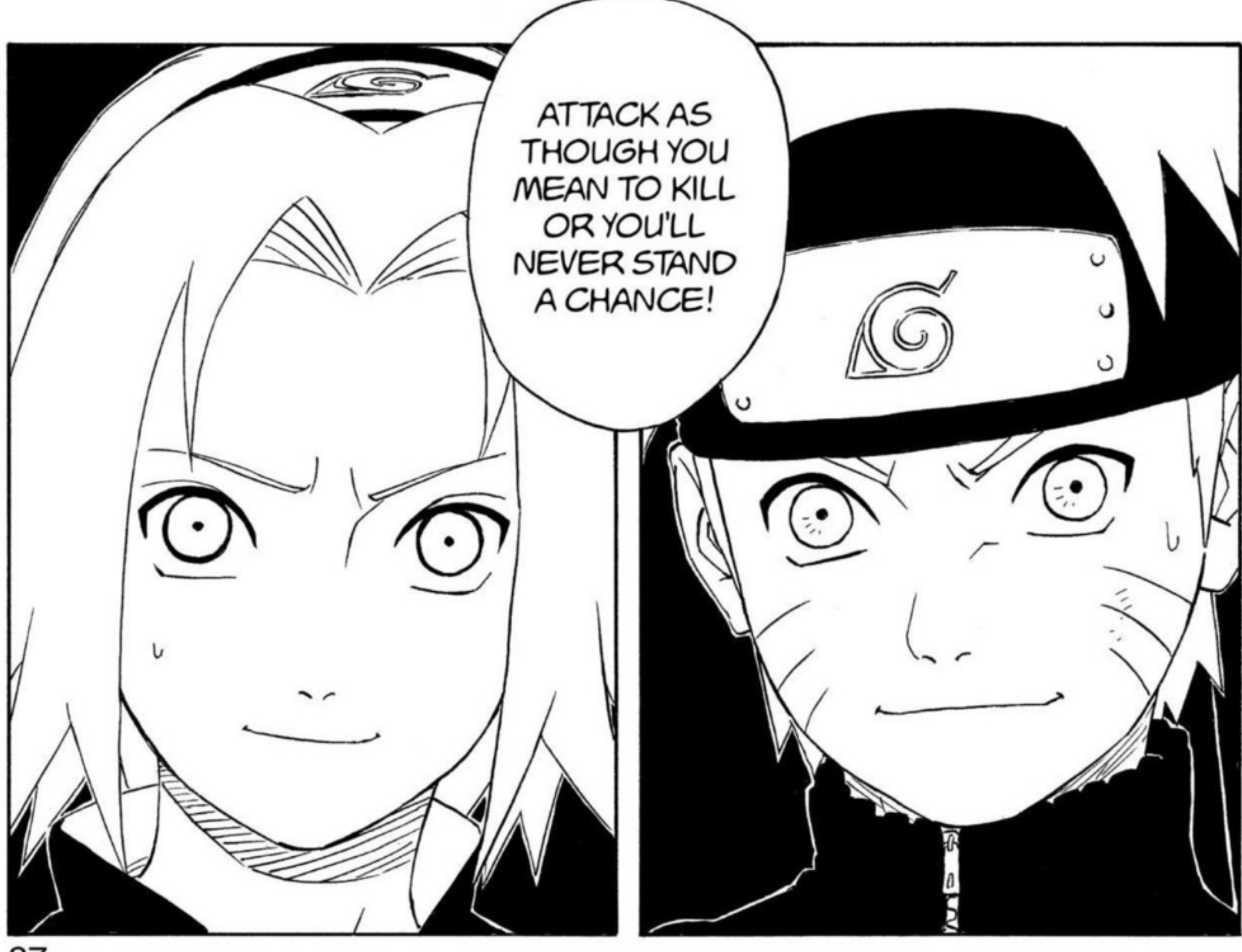

FROM HERE ON OUT, YOU TWO...
...ARE GOING TO BE PART OF MY TEAM AGAIN.


NOT AS SENSEI AND STUDENTS. BUT AS EQUALS.
FELLOW KONOHA SHINOBI.


READ
THIS
WAY


NOW... I WANT TO SEE HOW MUCH YOU'VE BOTH GROWN.
THE RULES ARE THE SAME AS WHEN WE FIRST MET.

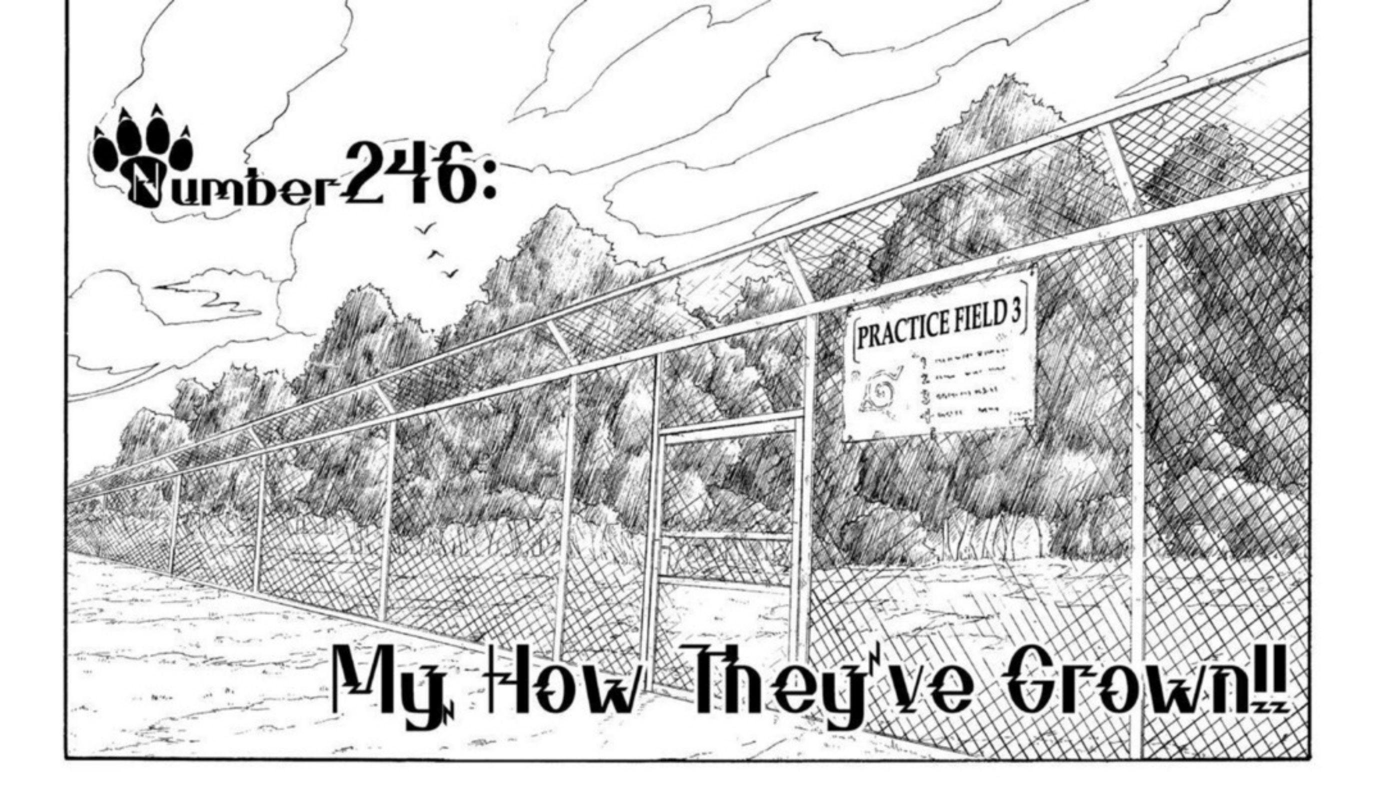

JINGLE

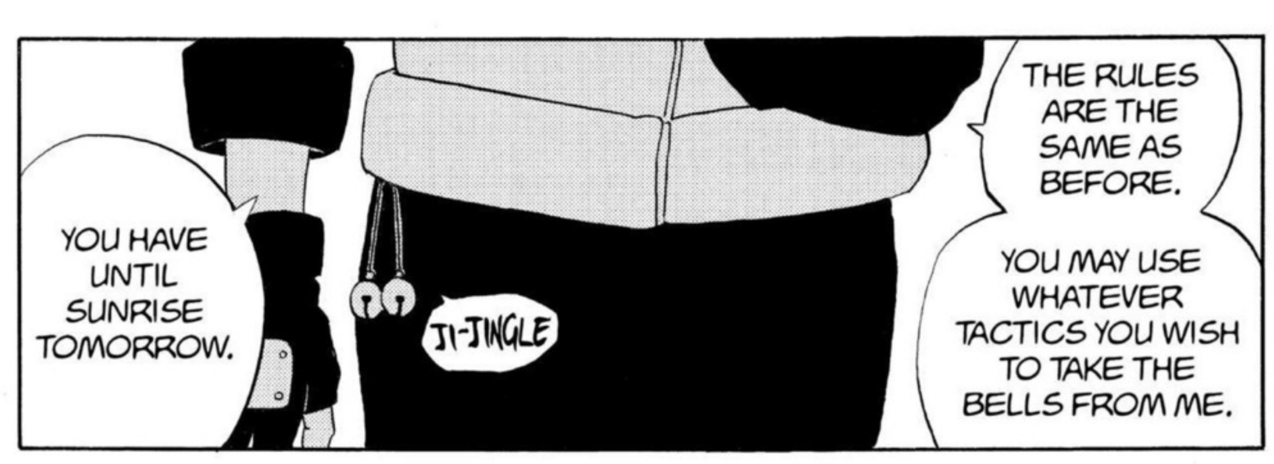

ATTACK AS THOUGH YOU MEAN TO KILL OR YOU'LL NEVER STAND A CHANCE!

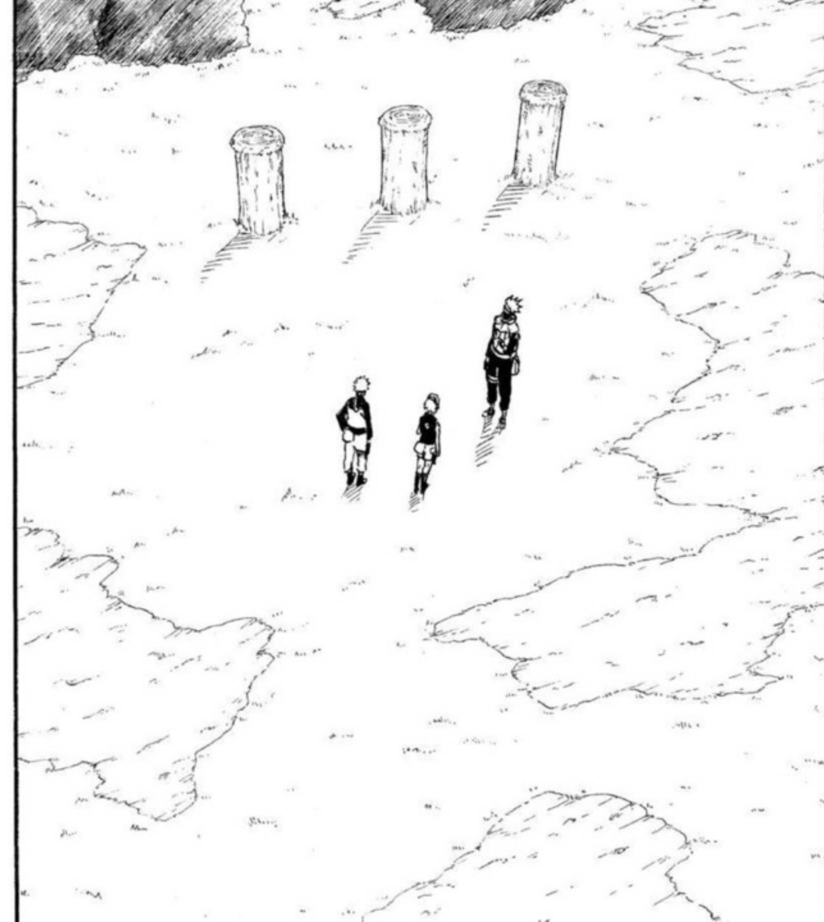



PROFILE

- FROM FUKUSHIMA PREFECTURE IN THE TÔHOKU, OR NORTHEAST REGION. THEREFORE HAS A TÔHOKU ACCENT. (MAY BE OBVIOUS, BUT IS A FRESH SOUND IN THE OFFICE.)
- HAS PUFFY CHEEKS. MAKES ONE WANT TO POKE THEM!
- FAMILY MAKES SELF-DEFENSE FORCE ISSUE PARACHUTES. AND LANDING MATS FOR JUMPING FROM HIGH PLACES SUCH AS OUT OF TALL BUILDINGS. THUS, HAS BEEN USED AS A TEST SUBJECT BY HIS FATHER IN PRODUCT TRIALS.
- QUITE A ROMANTIC. "IT'S LOVE," HE'S FOND OF SAYING. (WITH A TÔHOKU ACCENT, OF COURSE.)
- VERY SOCIABLE AND WELL-MANNERED, OBVIOUSLY RAISED WELL BY HIS PARENTS. (ALTHOUGH HE WAS USED AS A TEST SUBJECT...)
- GENTLE AND KIND, A VERY RARE SPECIMEN NOWADAYS.
- UNLIKE HIS CONTEMPORARY, ASSISTANT NO. 8 ITAKURA YÛICHI, CAN KEEP UP WITH GUNDAM CHAT. (AND IS QUITE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT A MYRIAD OF OTHER THINGS AS WELL.)


Number 246:
PRACTICE FIELD 3
My How They've Grown!!


THE RULES ARE THE SAME AS BEFORE.
YOU MAY USE WHATEVER TACTICS YOU WISH TO TAKE THE BELLS FROM ME.
JI-JINGLE
YOU HAVE UNTIL SUNRISE TOMORROW.

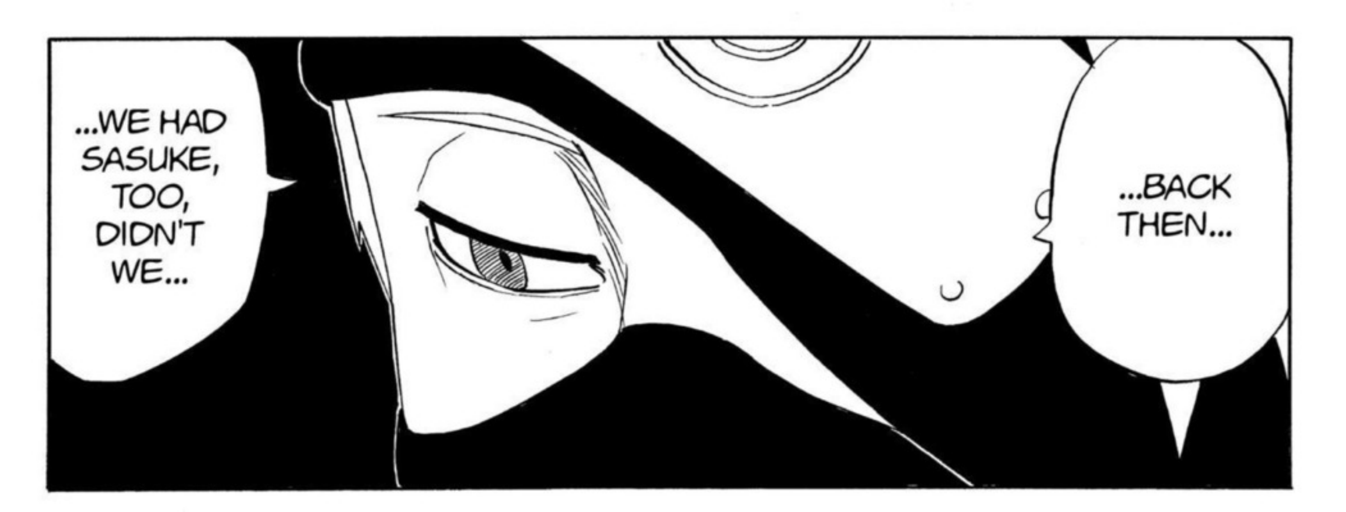



HUH... BRINGS BACK MEMOR-IES...
...THIS PLACE.
YEAH.


CELL NUMBER SEVEN...

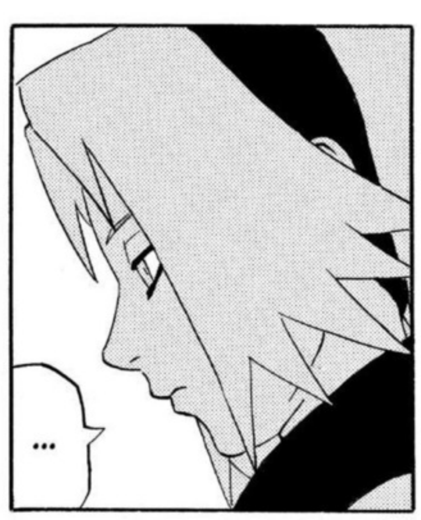

THIS WAS THE SITE OF YOUR VERY FIRST EXERCISE.
OH, RIGHT.
MAKE-OUT TACTICS


THE THREE-MAN CELL...


...WE HAD SASUKE, TOO, DIDN'T WE...
...BACK THEN...


...!


...


...

DOOM

MUTTER MUTTER

...

MUTTER MUTTER





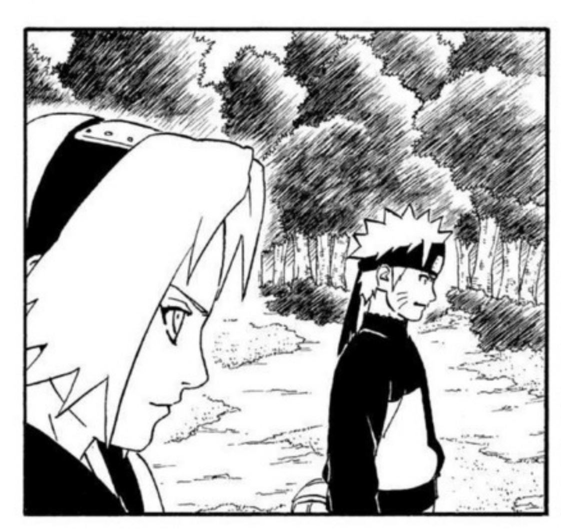





CINCH
HEH HEH, NOT GONNA READ THIS TIME...
...MASTER KAKASHI?
TAP...

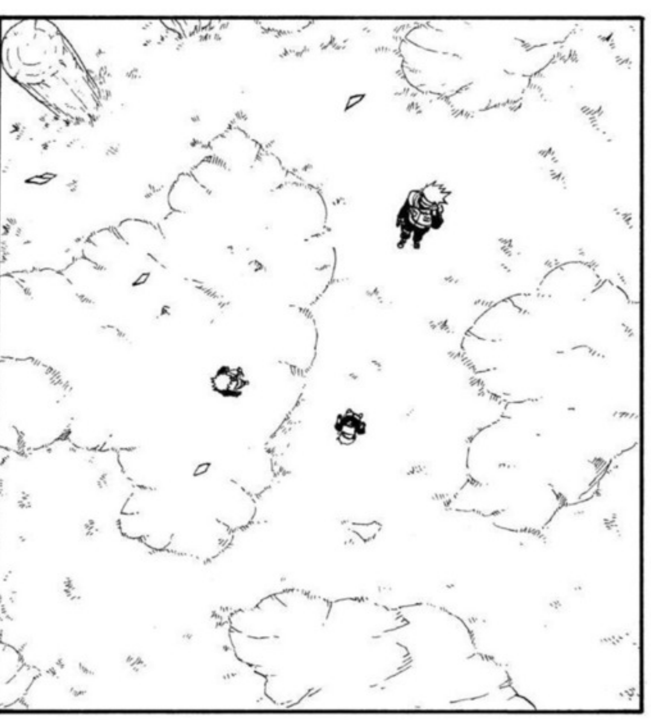

OR HAVE YOU FINISHED IT ALREADY?
KRIK


NOPE... JUST SAVING IT FOR LATER.
BESIDES, I GET THE FEELING THAT...
RUSTLE




...THIS TIME I'M GOING TO HAVE TO...
TUG
... MAKE MORE OF A SERIOUS EFFORT.



ZWISH

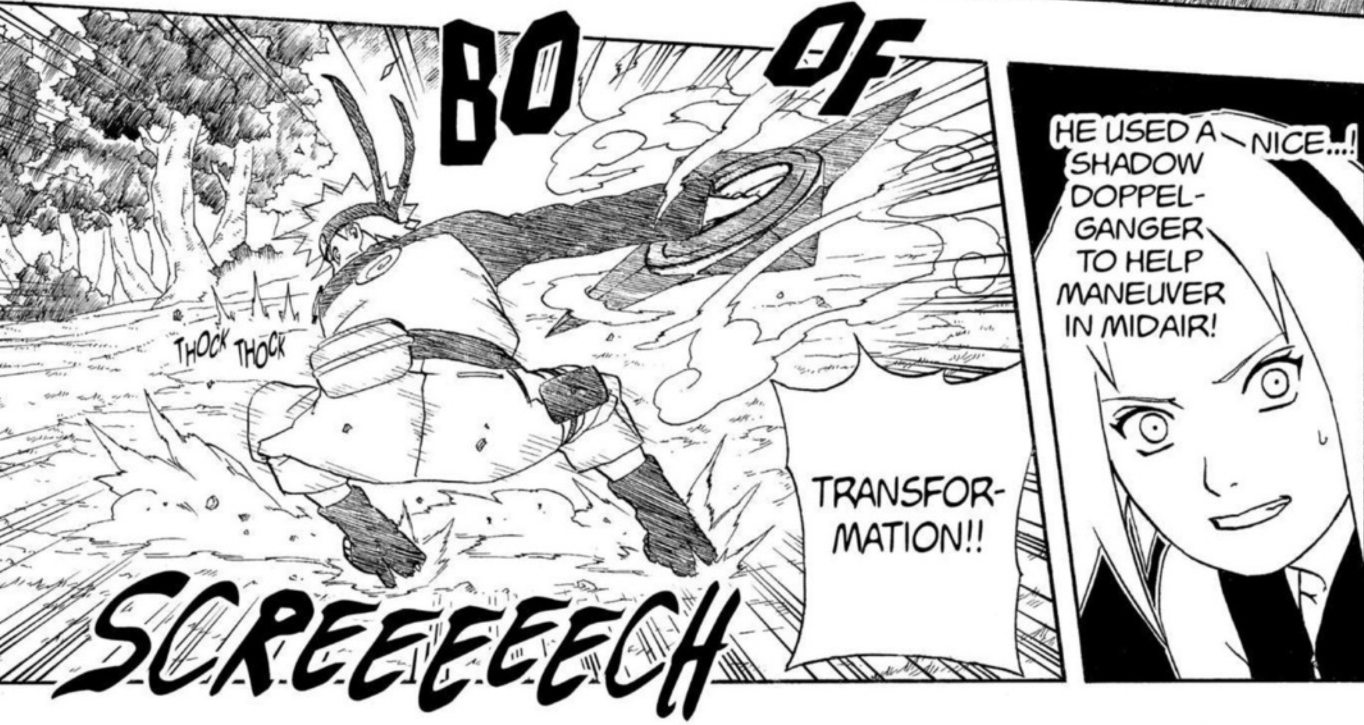
WHOOSH

SHMP

WHIP


SHOOF
WHOOSH
SWISH
UGH!
BOOF
KAGEBUNSHIN! SHADOW DOPPEL-GANGER!!
YANK


WHOOSH

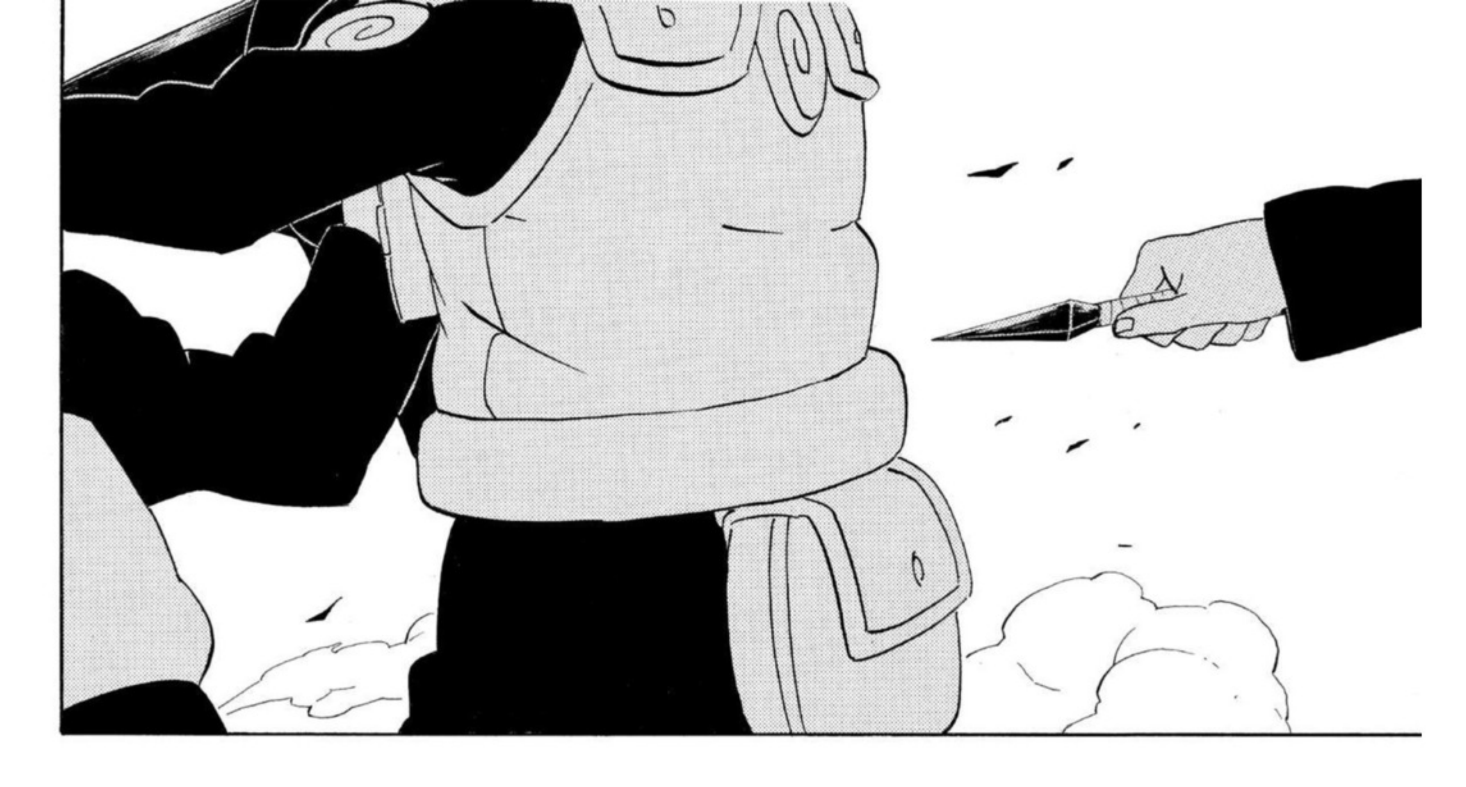

NICE...!
HE USED A SHADOW DOPPEL-GANGER TO HELP MANEUVER IN MIDAIR!
TRANSFOR-MATION!!
BO OF
THOCK THOCK
SCREEEEEECH


SHF

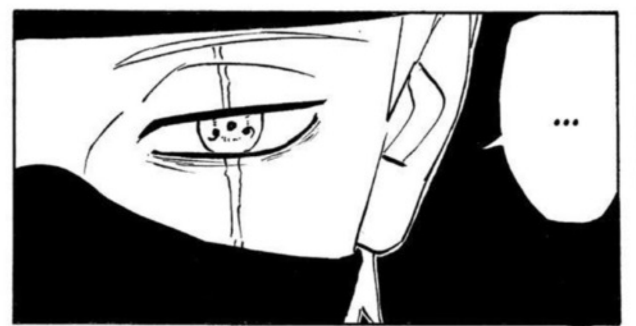

SNAG


FWHP





HEH... STILL THE IMPATIENT ONE, EH...
HIS USE OF SHADOW DOPPEL-GANGERS...AND HIS TIMING... THEY'VE BOTH IMPROVED.



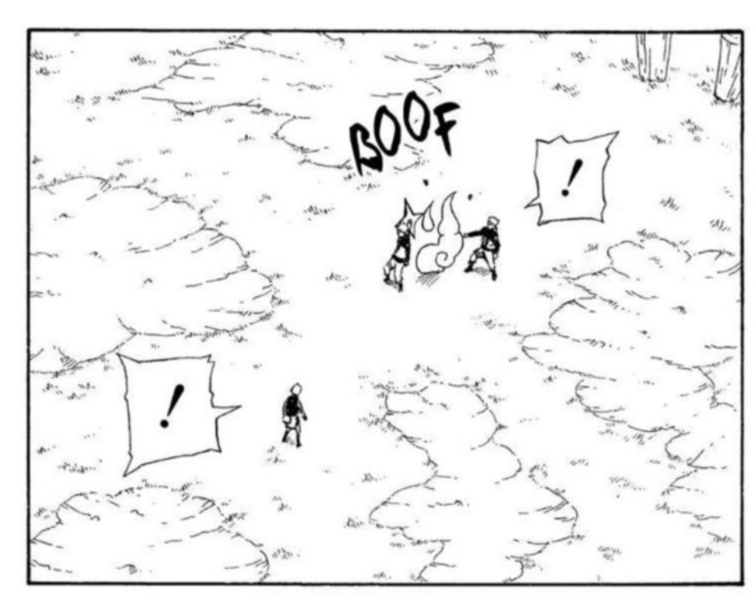




READ
THIS
WAY


NOT SO FAST.
I DIDN'T SAY, "GO."

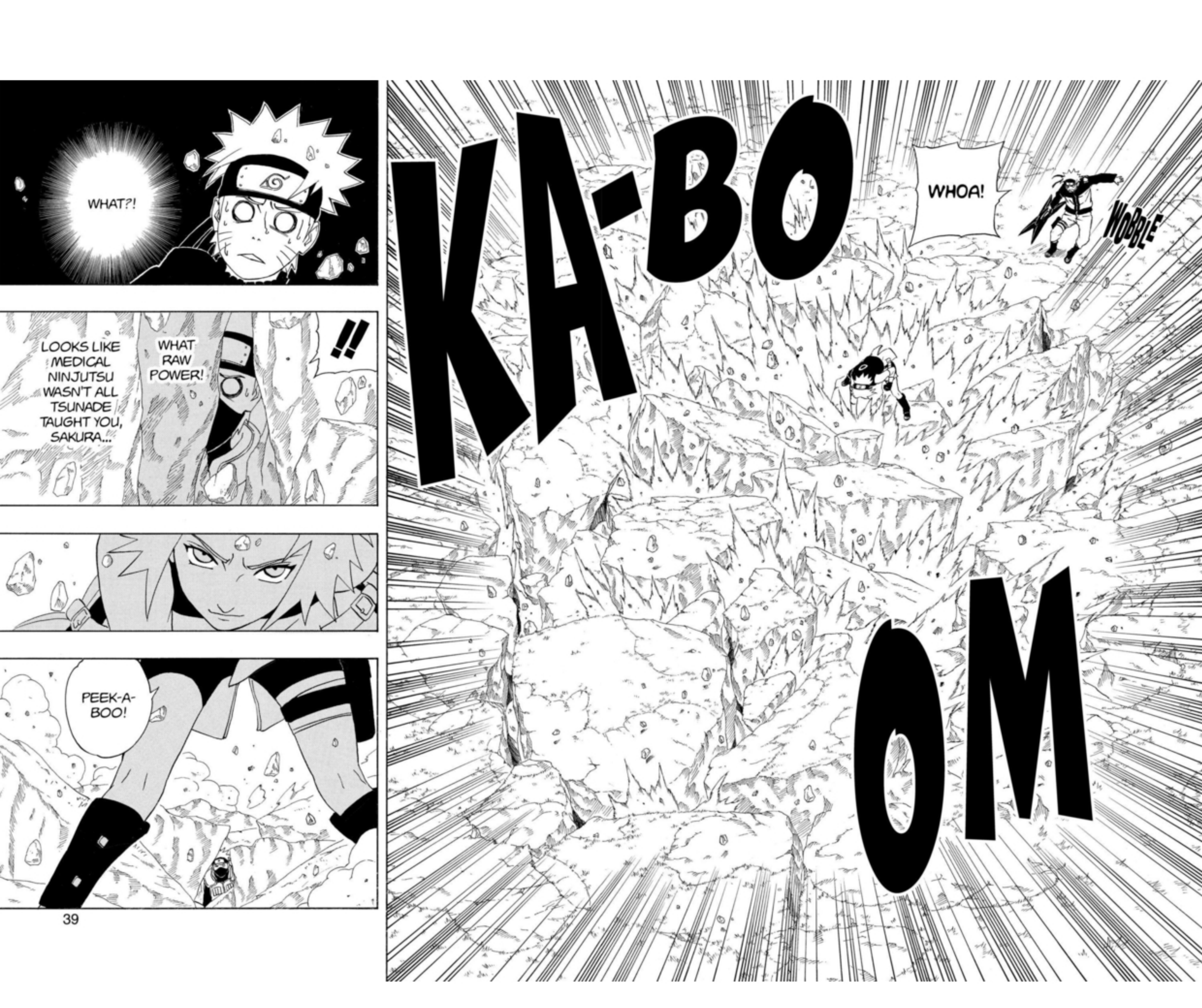

YOU REALLY HAVE MATURED, NARUTO...
ALL RIGHT, GO!


BOOF
!
!


RIGHT...
ABOVE...


LEFT...
BEHIND...

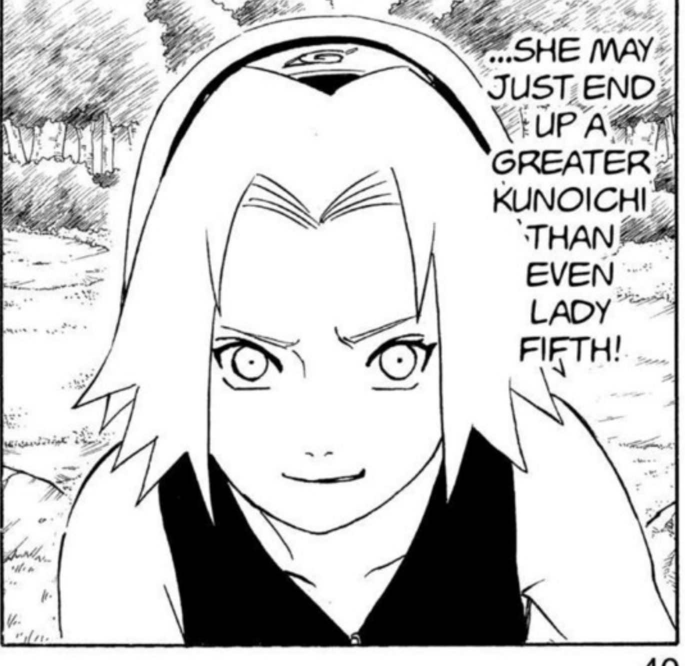

NO SIGN OF HIM ANY-WHERE... SO...
BELOW!!
REAR


WHAT?!
!!
WHAT RAW POWER!
LOOKS LIKE MEDICAL NINJUTSU WASN'T ALL TSUNADE TAUGHT YOU, SAKURA...
PEEK-A-BOO!
KA-BOOM
WHOA!
WOBBLE


NOTE TO SELF: *DO NOT* UPSET SAKURA.
...SHE'LL KILL YOU...!

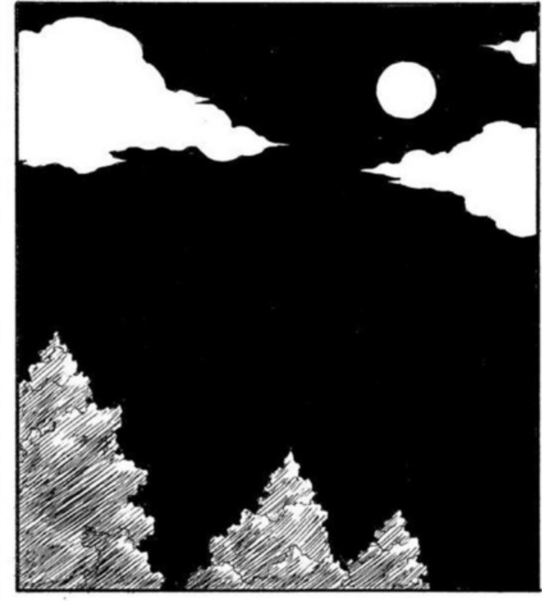

TO RAPIDLY MANIPULATE MAXIMUM CHAKRA AND INSTANTLY CONCENTRATE IT INTO ONE'S FIST...
...IS NO SMALL FEAT. IT TAKES AN INCREDIBLE AMOUNT OF CONTROL.
SHOOF...

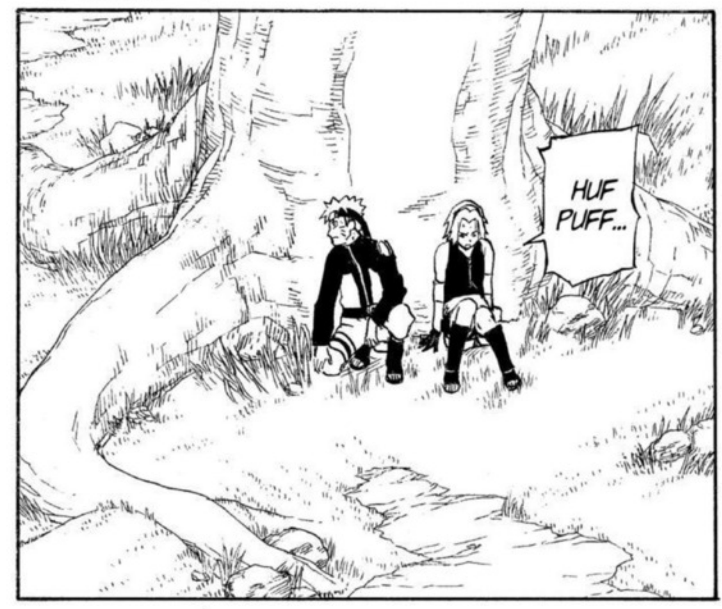

SAKURA WAS ALWAYS ADEPT AT GENJUTSU...
...BUT IF THIS DISPLAY OF SKILL IS ANY INDICATION...
JINGLE

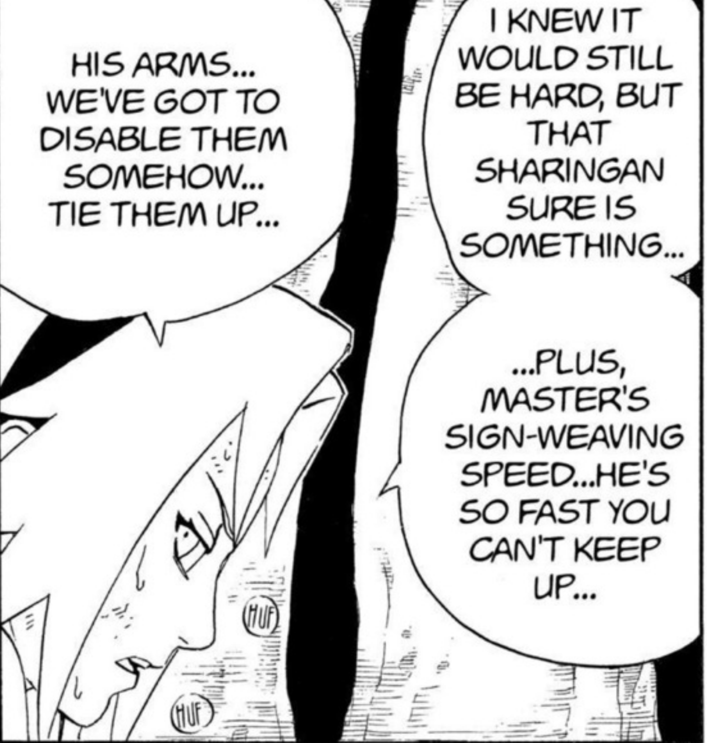

...SHE MAY JUST END UP A GREATER KUNOICHI THAN EVEN LADY FIFTH!


JINGLE
HAD YOUR SHOT, KIDS. *MY* TURN NOW...


READ
THIS
WAY



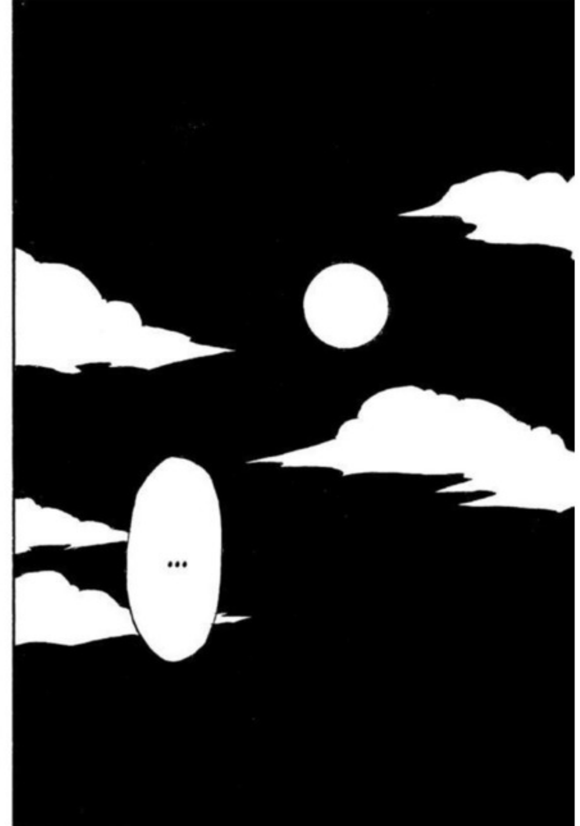

HUF
PUFF...


I KNEW IT WOULD STILL BE HARD, BUT THAT SHARINGAN SURE IS SOMETHING...
...PLUS, MASTER'S SIGN-WEAVING SPEED...HE'S SO FAST YOU CAN'T KEEP UP...
HIS ARMS... WE'VE GOT TO DISABLE THEM SOMEHOW... TIE THEM UP...
HUF
HUF

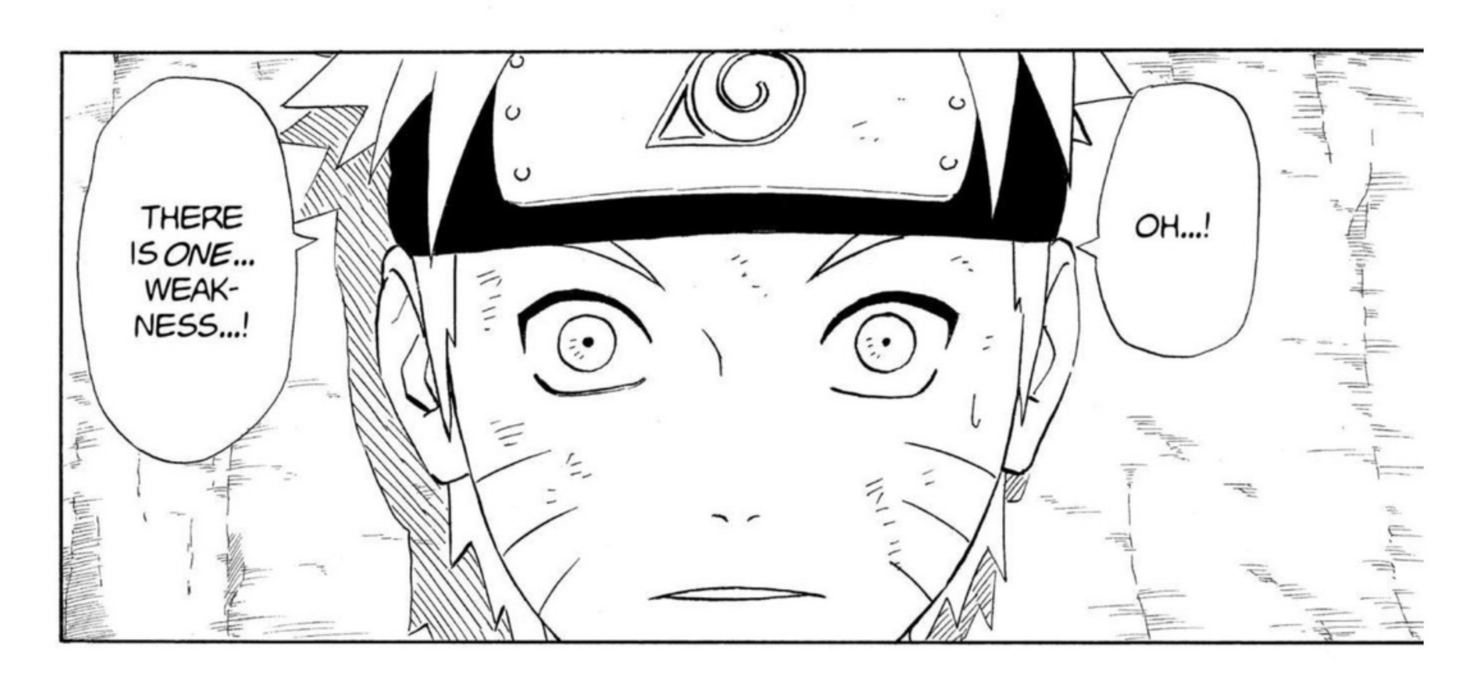

YEAH...MASTER KAKASHI'S AS SUPER STRONG AS EVER.
SMARTER THAN SHIKAMARU... KEENER SENSE OF SMELL THAN KIBA...
...MORE ADEPT AT SHARINGAN THAN SASUKE... AND HIS TAIJUTSU'S GREATER THAN BUSHY BROW'S...

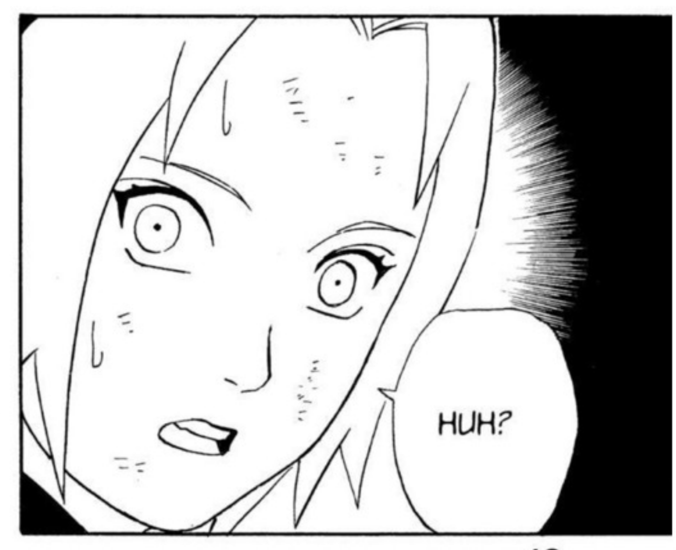

BUT HE'S GOT TO HAVE SOME WEAK-NESS...!
C'MON, THINK...


...


...


PHEW...CAN'T BELIEVE I'VE HAD TO USE MY SHARINGAN THIS MUCH... ITS BIGGEST DISADVANTAGE IS HOW QUICKLY IT DRAINS MY STAMINA...
...BUT I SHOULD BE ABLE TO HOLD THEM OFF UNTIL SUNRISE...


OH...!
THERE IS *ONE*... WEAK-NESS...!


HUH?

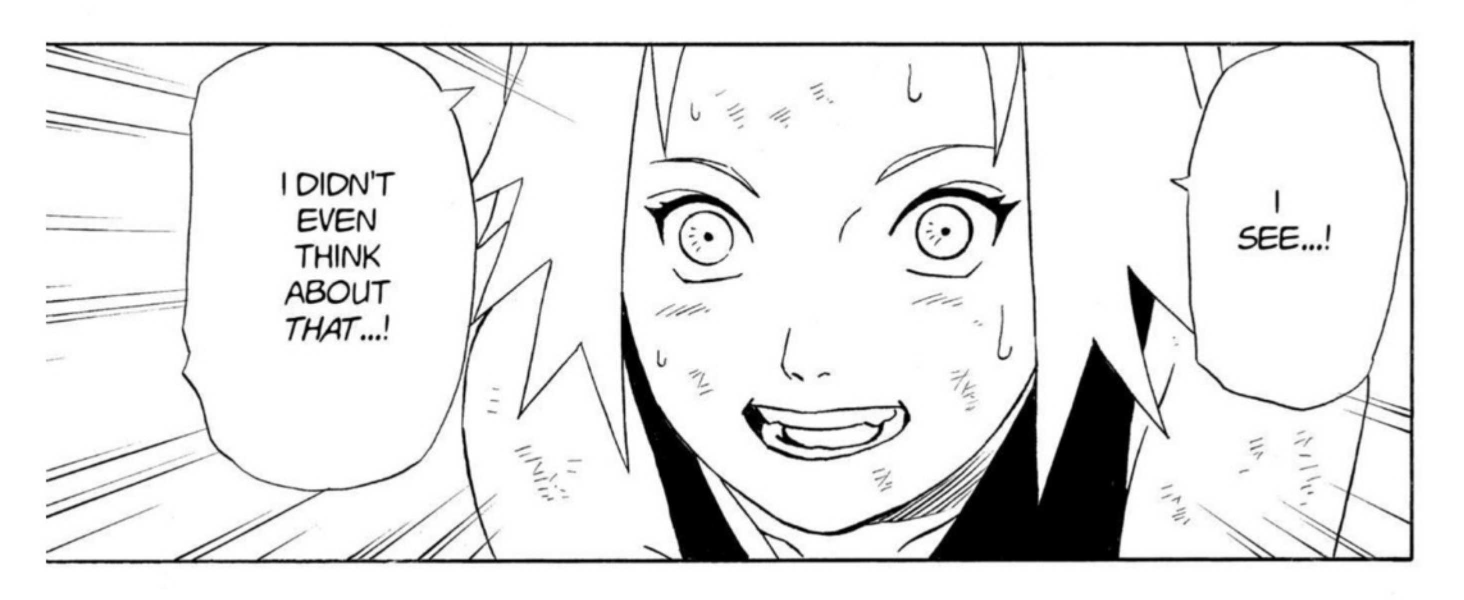

R... REALLY ...?!
HEH HEH... C'MON, SAKURA!
THINK CAREFULLY, AND YOU'LL SEE IT TOO...


READ THIS WAY


OH, WOULD YOU PLEASE QUIT STALLING AND JUST *SPILL* IT, NARUTO!
TEE-HEE-HEE...ALL RIGHT...


THEY REALLY DO MAKE A FORMIDABLE TEAM.
CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHAT THEY'LL COME AT ME WITH NEXT...




I SEE...!
I DIDN'T EVEN THINK ABOUT *THAT*...!


IF WE STRIKE *JUST RIGHT*...
NOT ONLY WOULD IT DISABLE HIS ARMS...
...IT'D BLOCK HIS SHARINGAN, TOO!


NARUTO...
...YOU STILL ARE THE NO. 1 MAVERICK NINJA!

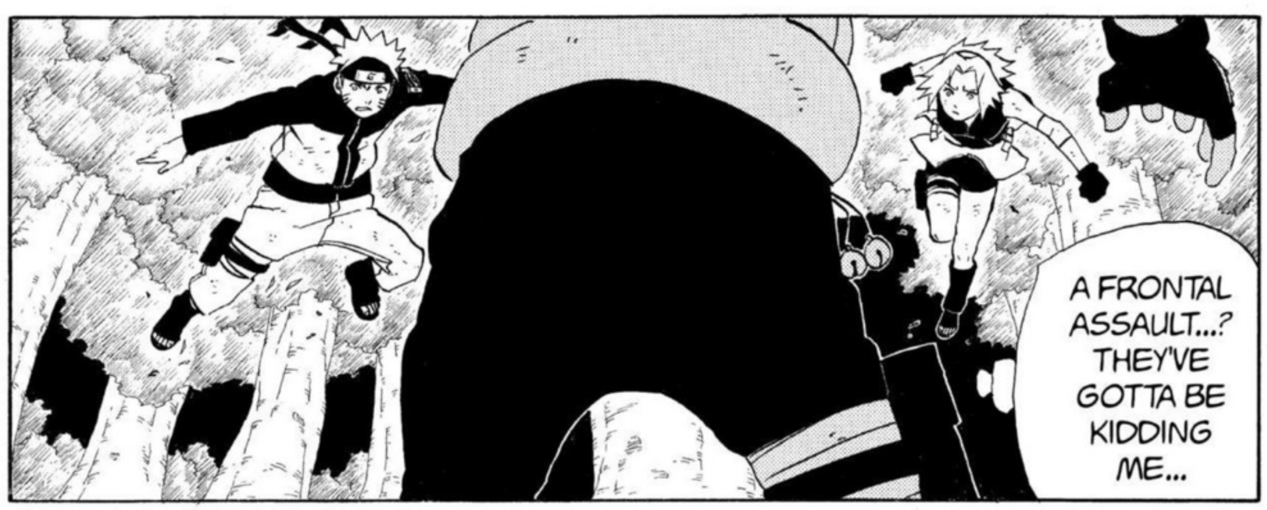
ARE YOU READY?!
THEN WHAT ARE WE STANDING HERE LOOKING AT EACH OTHER FOR?
YUP! LET'S DO IT!


HERE THEY COME!


SNIFF SNIFF



POP


A FRONTAL ASSAULT...? THEY'VE GOTTA BE KIDDING ME...


NOW, NARUTO!


HERE I GO! HEY, MASTER KAKASHI...


!

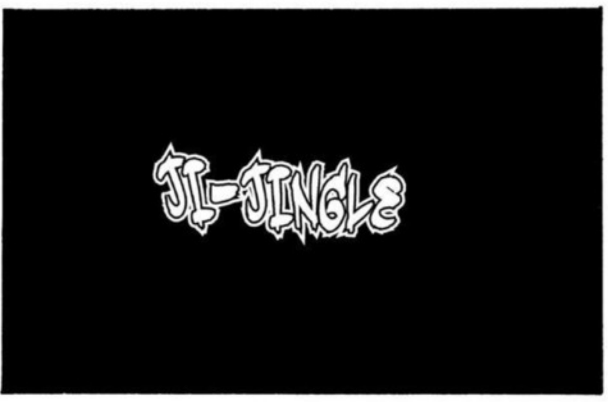

...MAKE-OUT TACTICS' FINAL PLOT TWIST!
THE MAIN CHARACTER IS REALLY...
!!!
WH... WHAT?!!
CLAP
N...NO!!
!!


READ
THIS
WAY




GAH!
BECAUSE OF THE SHARINGAN, I CAN STILL READ HIS LIPS!!
CLAMP




JI-JINGLE


OH!


HEH HEH... SHINOBI READ THE HIDDEN MEANINGS WITHIN THE HIDDEN MEANINGS.
REMEMBER, MASTER?

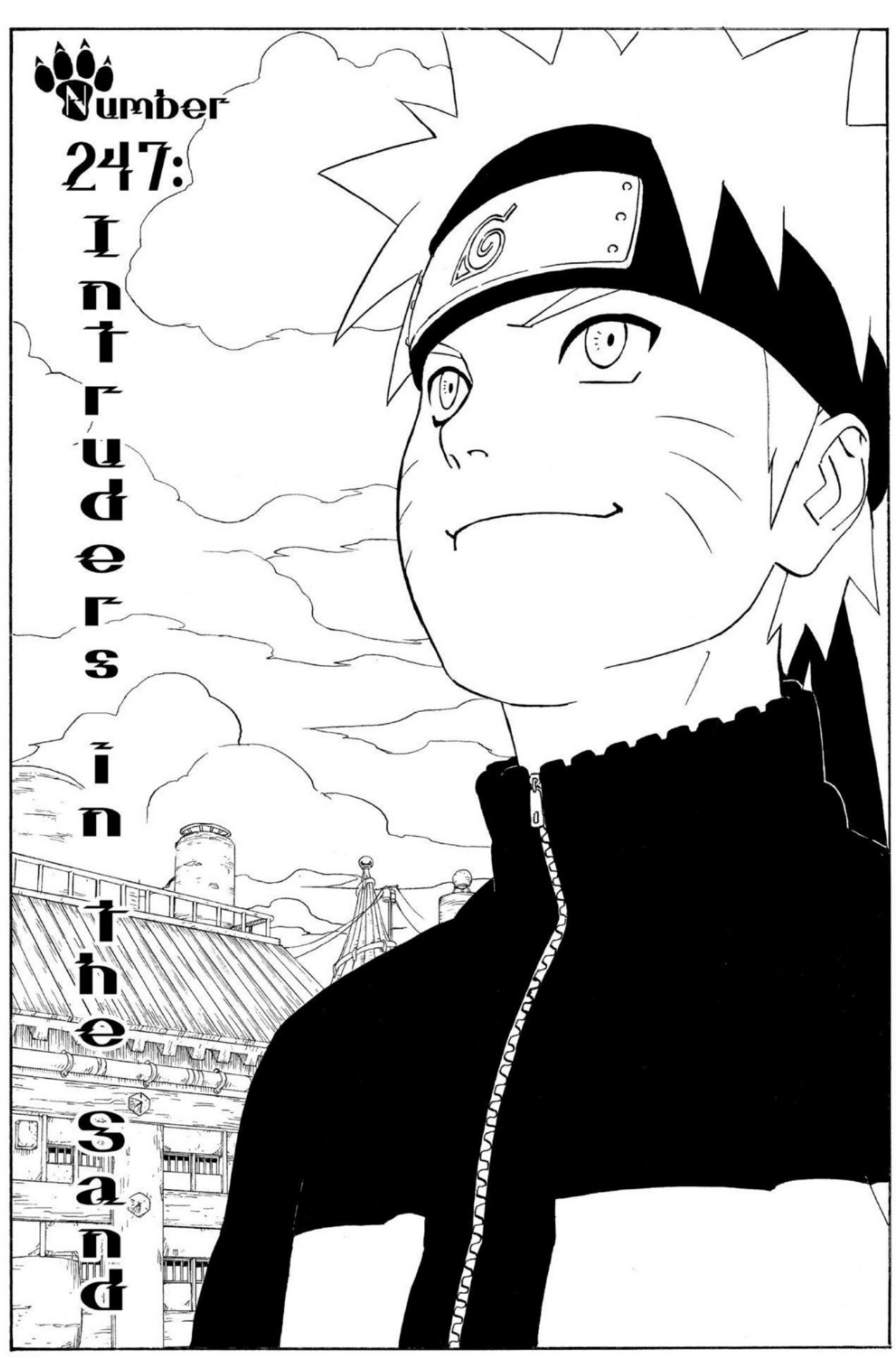
## THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
## MY PERSONAL HISTORY, VIDEO GAMES PART 1

SOMETIMES, IF I DRAW TOO LONG, I START THINKING, "HAVE I EVER SPENT TIME IN MY LIFE DOING ANYTHING OTHER THAN DRAWING PICTURES?"

AND THEN IT COMES TO ME. YES, THERE IS ONE OTHER THING.

WHICH IS...VIDEO GAMES.

EVER SINCE I WAS A KID, I LOVED PLAYING VIDEO GAMES ALMOST AS MUCH AS I LOVED DRAWING. MY FRIENDS ALL DID, TOO... AND EVEN MY FOLKS, SO I DON'T THINK OF MYSELF AS AN EXCEPTION... BUT IN ANY CASE, I LOVED VIDEO GAMES AND PLAYED THEM A LOT. OF COURSE, THE STANDARD GAME PLATFORM AT THE TIME WAS THE FAMILY COMPUTER, A.K.A. THE FAMICOM.

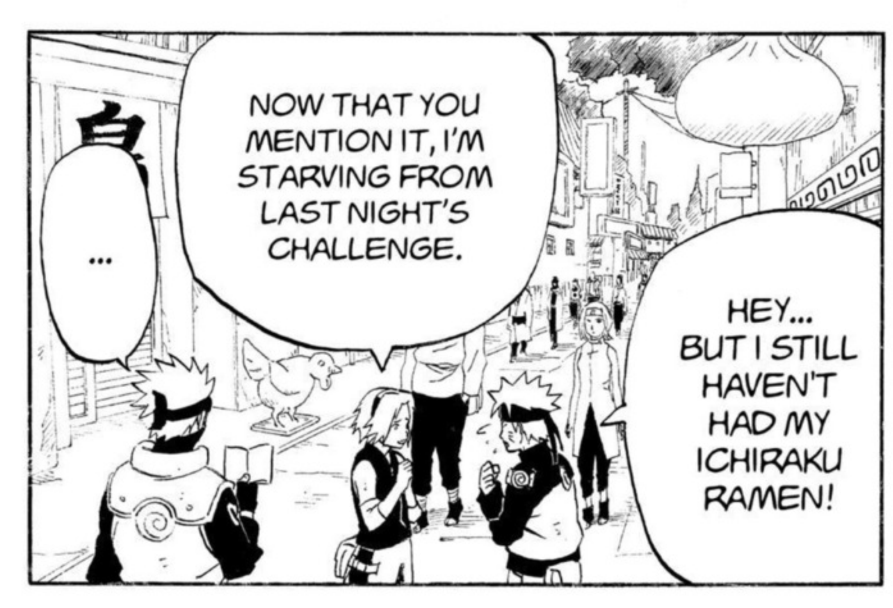

Number 247: Intruders in the Sand

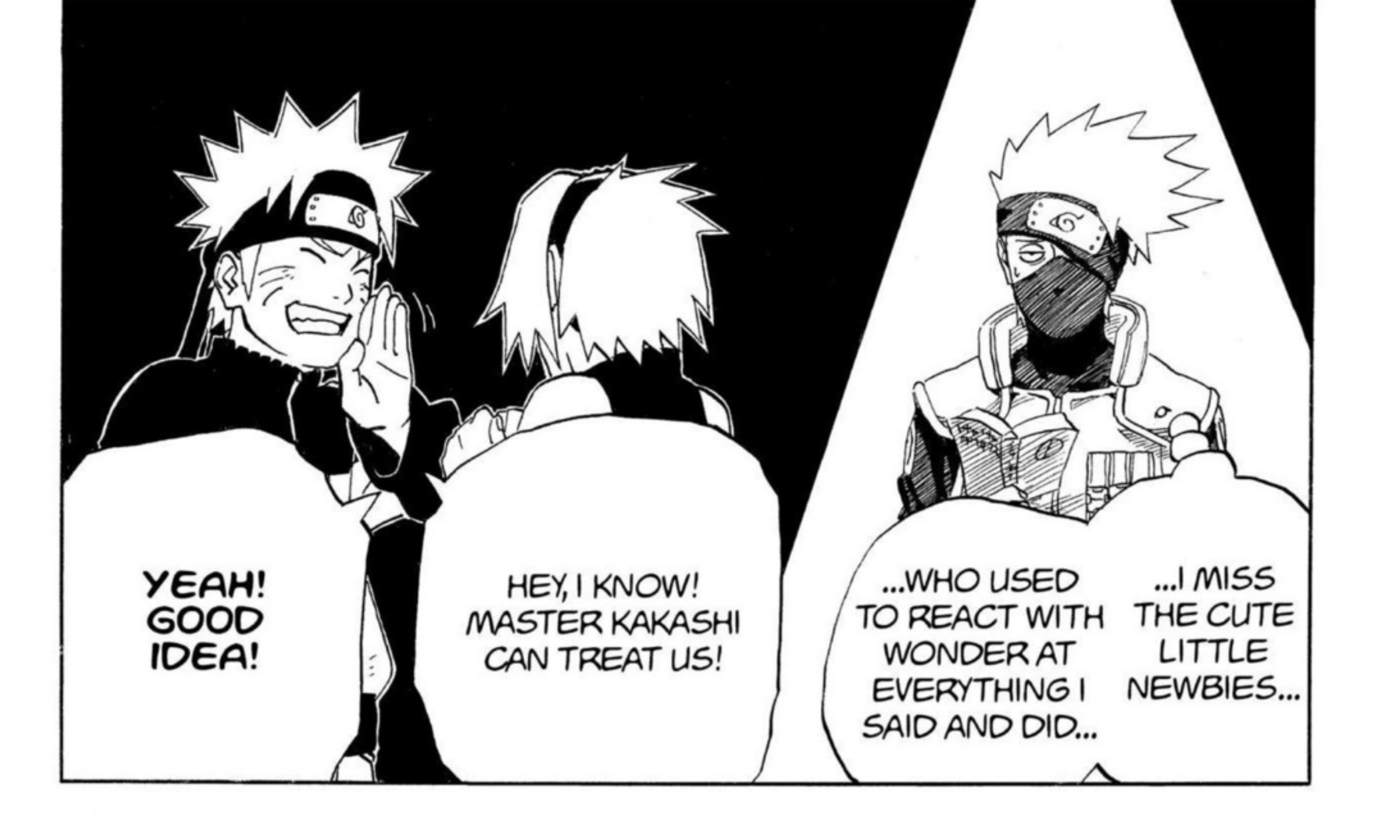

MY, MY, HOW YOU GUYS HAVE GROWN!
GAB GAB
GAB GAB
I HONESTLY DIDN'T THINK YOU'D MANAGE TO TAKE THE BELLS!
ふとん
肉まん


HEH HEH! MAYBE I'VE SURPASSED YOU, MASTER KAKASHI!
LIKE THAT'LL EVER HAPPEN!


SOMEDAY... MAYBE...
AFTER ALL, THIS OLD DOG'S STILL GOT SOME NEW TRICKS...
...IN FACT, JUST THE OTHER DAY, I INVENTED THIS AMAZING NEW JUTSU...


GRROWL

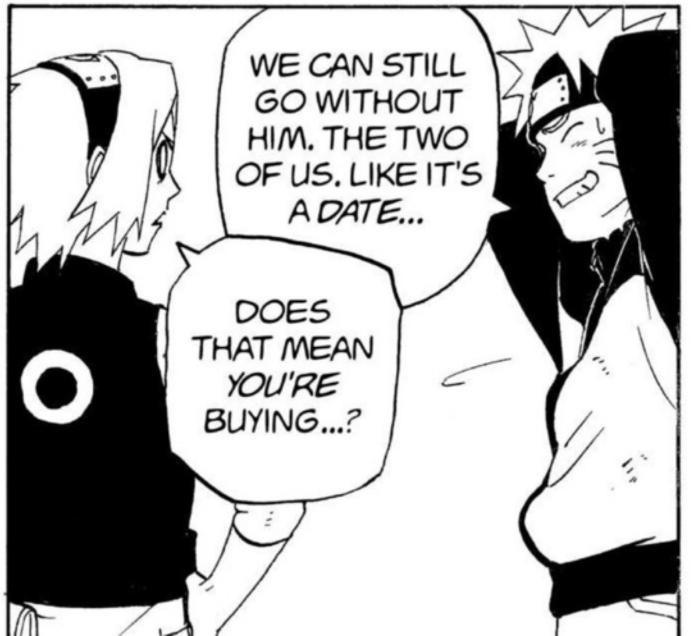

HEY... BUT I STILL HAVEN'T HAD MY ICHIRAKU RAMEN!
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, I'M STARVING FROM LAST NIGHT'S CHALLENGE.
...


...I MISS THE CUTE LITTLE NEWBIES...
...WHO USED TO REACT WITH WONDER AT EVERYTHING I SAID AND DID...
HEY, I KNOW! MASTER KAKASHI CAN TREAT US!
YEAH! GOOD IDEA!


...SORRY.
GOTTA GO DRAW UP AND SUBMIT THE PLATOON LIST WITH THE NEW TEAMS.
LATER, 'GATORS!


POOF
HE'S BLOWING *US* OFF...?!
HE WANTS TO READ THE REST OF HIS BOOK, MOST LIKELY.


WELL...


WE CAN STILL GO WITHOUT HIM. THE TWO OF US. LIKE IT'S A *DATE*...
DOES THAT MEAN *YOU'RE* BUYING...?


!

!
!
ふぐ

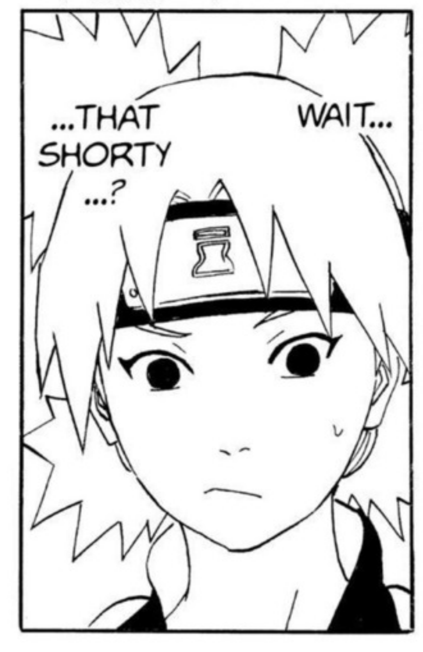

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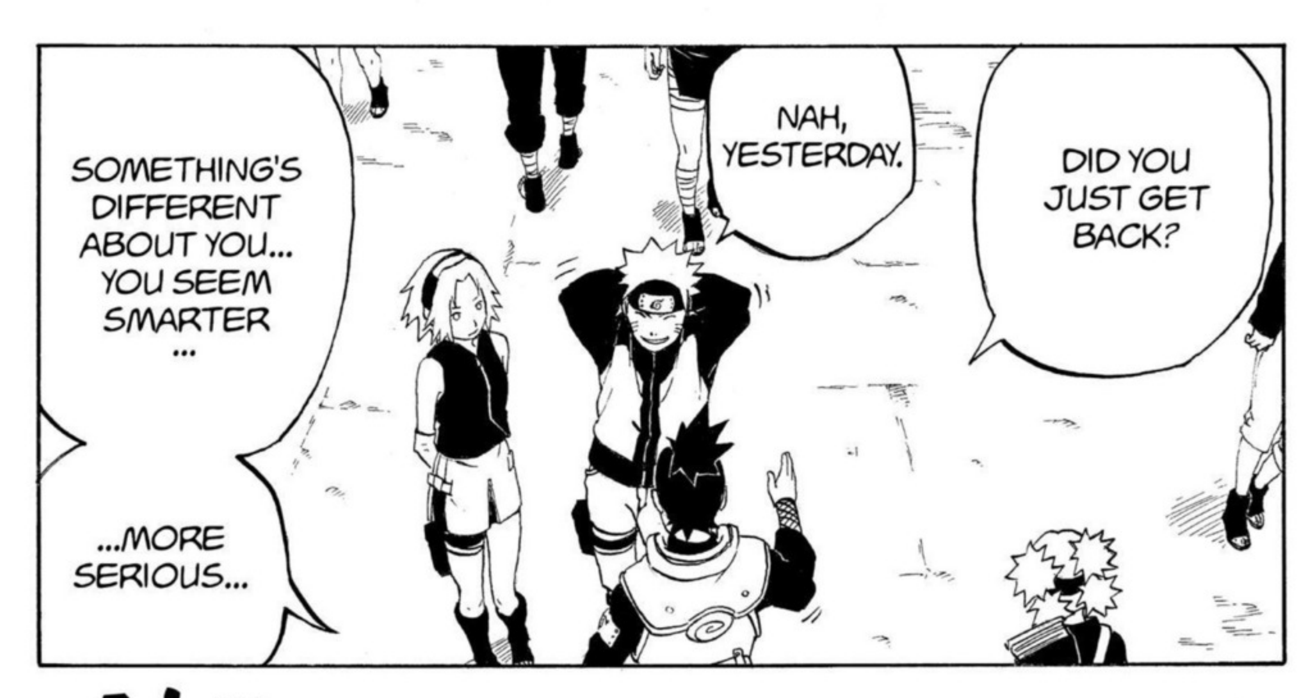

SHIKAMARU! TEMARI! HEY!
!
LOOK WHO'S BACK!!


READ THIS WAY

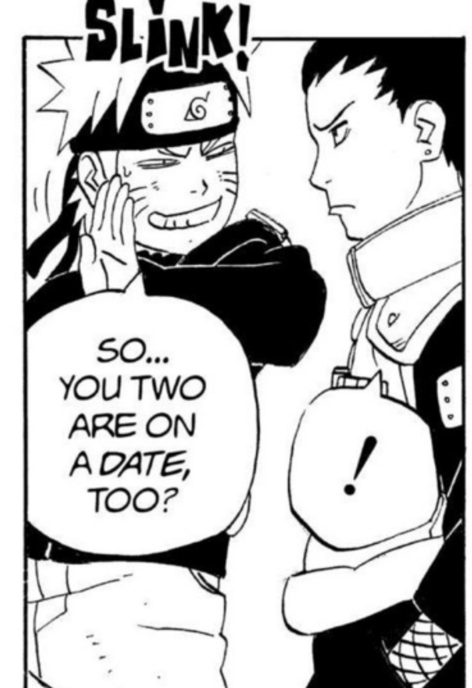

HEY!
NARUTO!


!
SHIKA-MARU!!


WAIT...
...THAT SHORTY ...?


DID YOU JUST GET BACK?
NAH, YESTERDAY.
SOMETHING'S DIFFERENT ABOUT YOU... YOU SEEM SMARTER ...
...MORE SERIOUS...

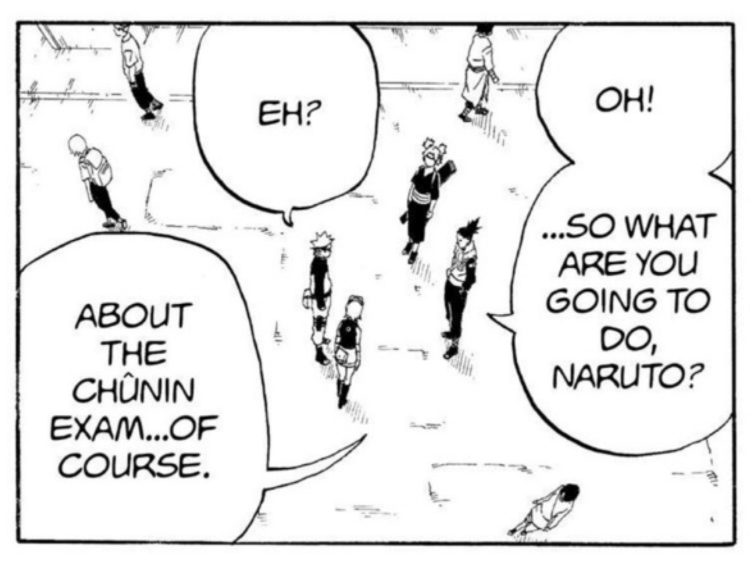

ERNT! WRONG ANSWER! PLEASE TRY AGAIN!
NUH-UH
OH... REALLY?
WILT...
SAKURA!


SLINK!
SO... YOU TWO ARE ON A DATE, TOO?
!


NOT. EVEN. CLOSE.


OH PLEASE, LIKE I WOULD EVER...?
IT'S ALMOST CHÛNIN SELECTION EXAM TIME AGAIN. AND WHILE I'VE BEEN ACTING AS LIAISON BETWEEN THE SAND AND KONOHA...
...I'M BEING *FORCED* TO ACT AS EXAM PROCTOR, SO...
...I WAS ORDERED TO ESCORT THE SAND AMBASSADOR, THAT'S ALL.


...
THE CHÛNIN SELECTION EXAM, HUH...
BRINGS BACK MEMORIES...


OH!
...SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, NARUTO?
EH?
ABOUT THE CHÛNIN EXAM...OF COURSE.


YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE IN OUR YEAR...
...WHO *ISN'T* A CHÛNIN.




WHAT ?!!!


YOU MEAN... *YOU'RE* A CHÛNIN TOO, SAKURA?
YUP.


...AND, JUST SO YOU KNOW...
...NEJI, KANKURO, AND THIS LADY HERE ARE ALREADY JÔNIN.
NO WAY !!


OH!


GAARA!
WHAT ABOUT GAARA?

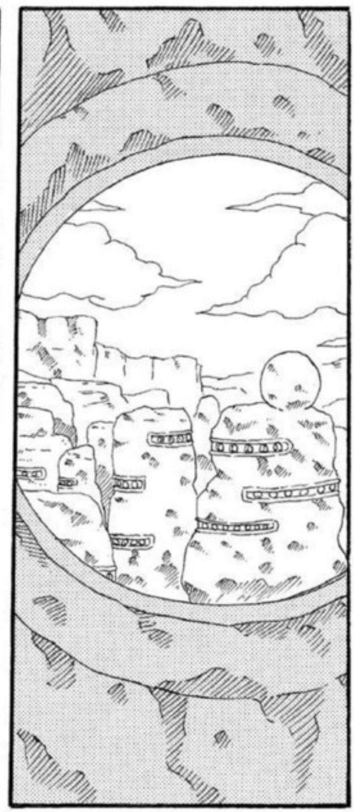


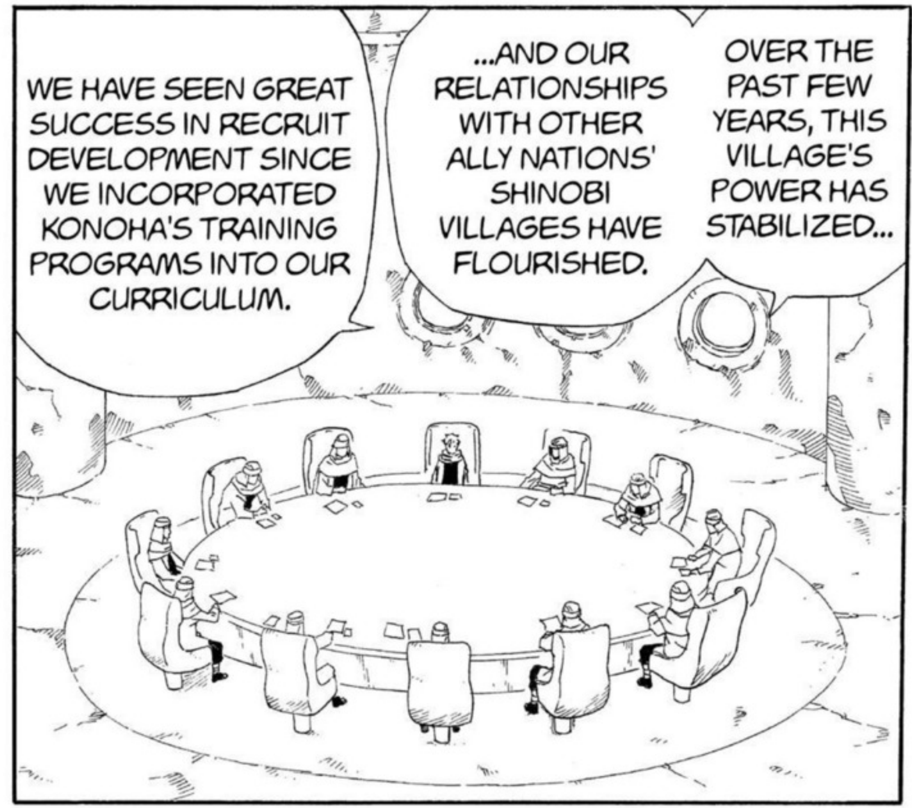
LORD KAZEKAGE...

...IT IS TIME.

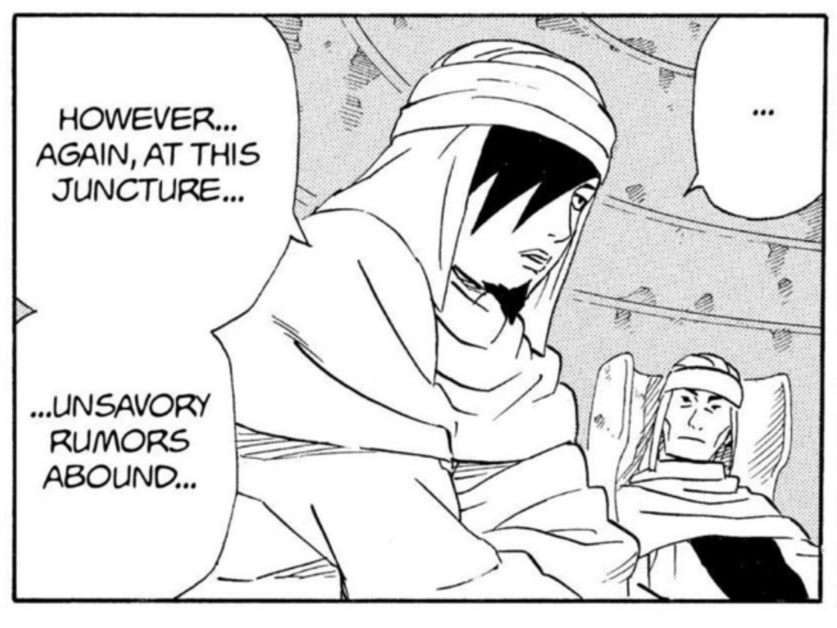
VERY WELL.


READ
THIS
WAY




OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, THIS VILLAGE'S POWER HAS STABILIZED...
...AND OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ALLY NATIONS' SHINOBI VILLAGES HAVE FLOURISHED.
WE HAVE SEEN GREAT SUCCESS IN RECRUIT DEVELOPMENT SINCE WE INCORPORATED KONOHA'S TRAINING PROGRAMS INTO OUR CURRICULUM.

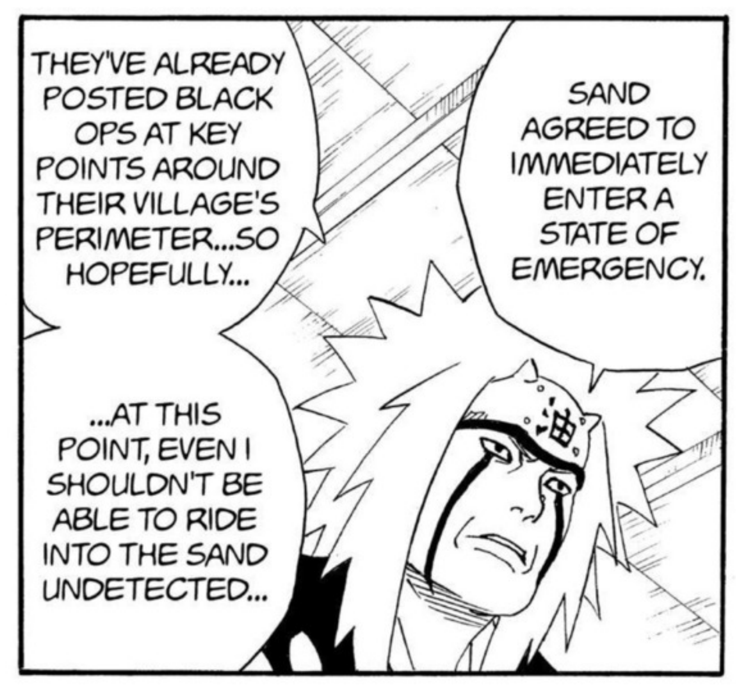

THE CHÛNIN EXAM IS APPROACH-ING.
I LOOK FORWARD TO ITS RESULTS.


...
HOWEVER... AGAIN, AT THIS JUNCTURE...
...UNSAVORY RUMORS ABOUND...


SUCH AS?


THIS IS FROM LORD JIRAIYA, ONE OF THE LEGENDARY THREE GREAT SHINOBI...
...BUT HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF AN ORGANIZATION CALLED "THE AKATSUKI"?




SAND AGREED TO IMMEDIATELY ENTER A STATE OF EMERGENCY.
THEY'VE ALREADY POSTED BLACK OPS AT KEY POINTS AROUND THEIR VILLAGE'S PERIMETER...SO HOPEFULLY...
...AT THIS POINT, EVEN I SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO RIDE INTO THE SAND UNDETECTED...

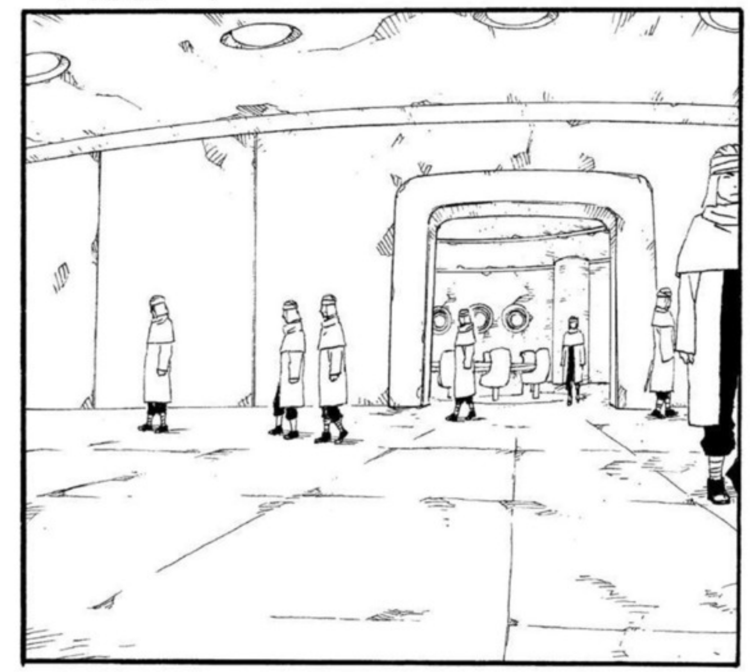

SO WHY HAS THE AKATSUKI STARTED MOVING ABOUT SO OVERTLY?
WHAT DO THEY SEEK?
THAT I STILL DON'T KNOW.


WHICH IS WHY I'M HEADING OUT AGAIN.
だんご





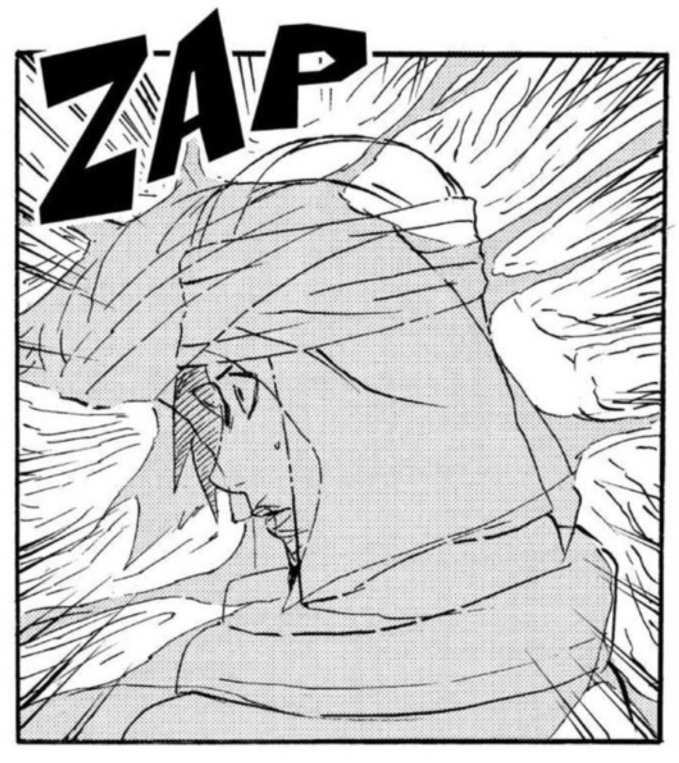




NICE WORK, YURA...TAKING THE INITIATIVE TO TIGHTEN VILLAGE SECURITY EVEN PRIOR TO TODAY'S MEETING.

I *HAVE* BEEN A SENIOR OFFICIAL FOR FOUR YEARS.

AND WITH LORD JIRAIYA AS THE INTELLIGENCE SOURCE... PERHAPS IT WAS HASTY, BUT I THOUGHT IT PRUDENT.









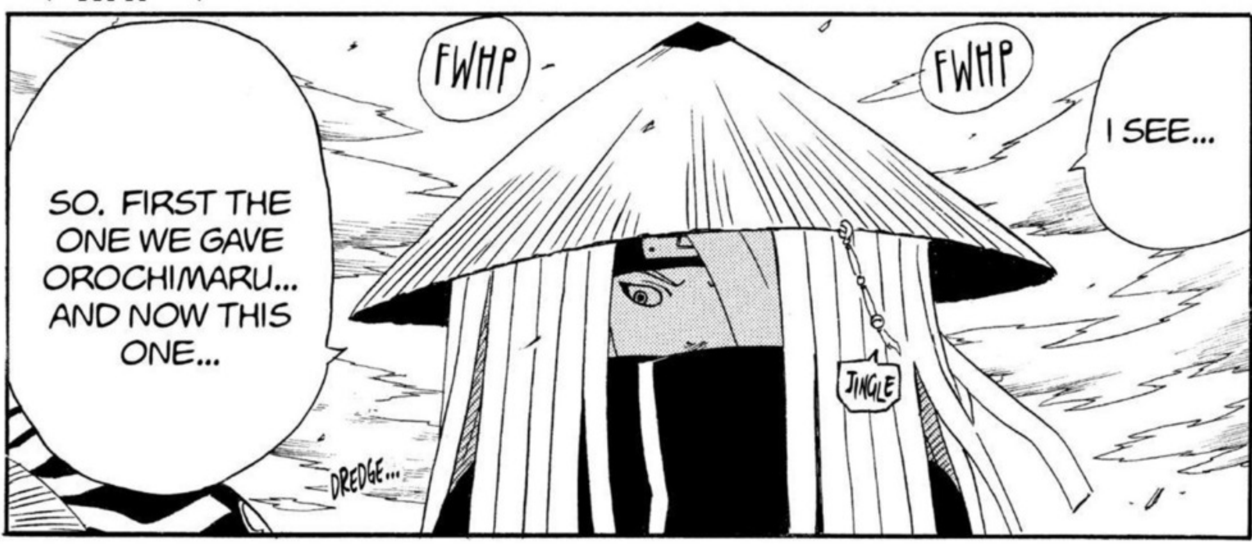


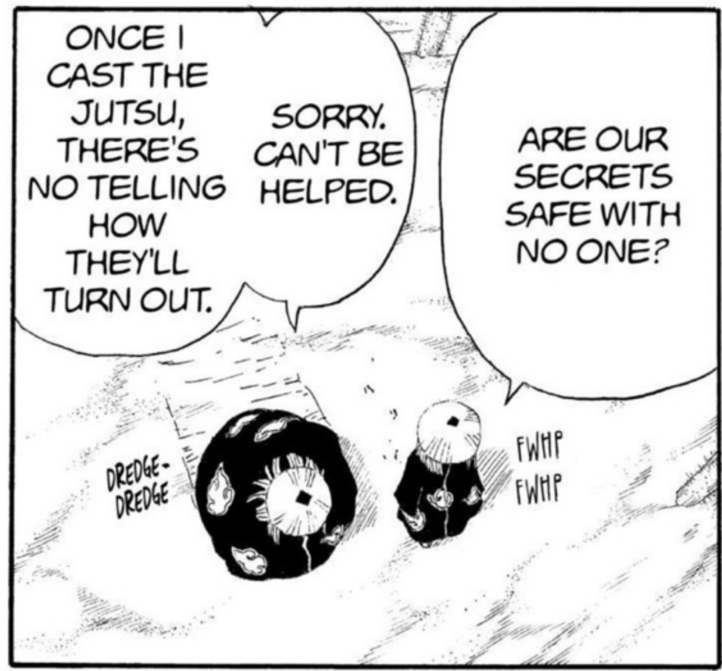


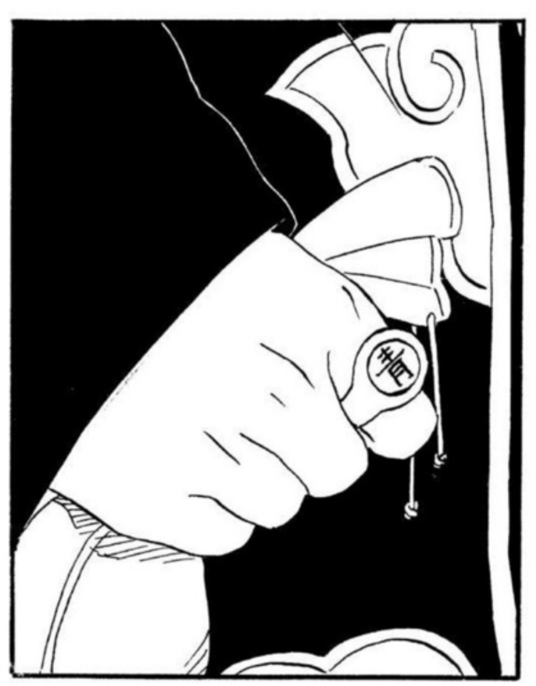
I SEE...
...SO THAT'S WHAT'S...

FWHP
FWHP
DREDGE DREDGE
WHOOOOO

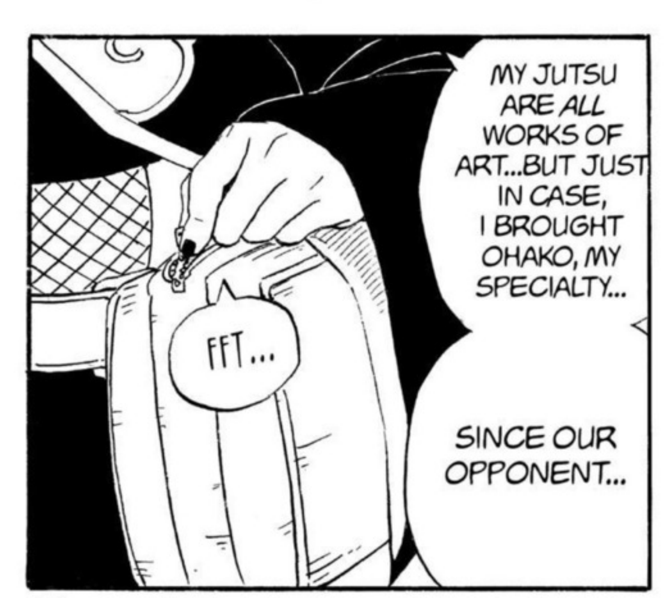

READ
THIS
WAY


FWHP
FWHP
I SEE...
SO. FIRST THE ONE WE GAVE OROCHIMARU... AND NOW THIS ONE...
JINGLE
DREDGE...

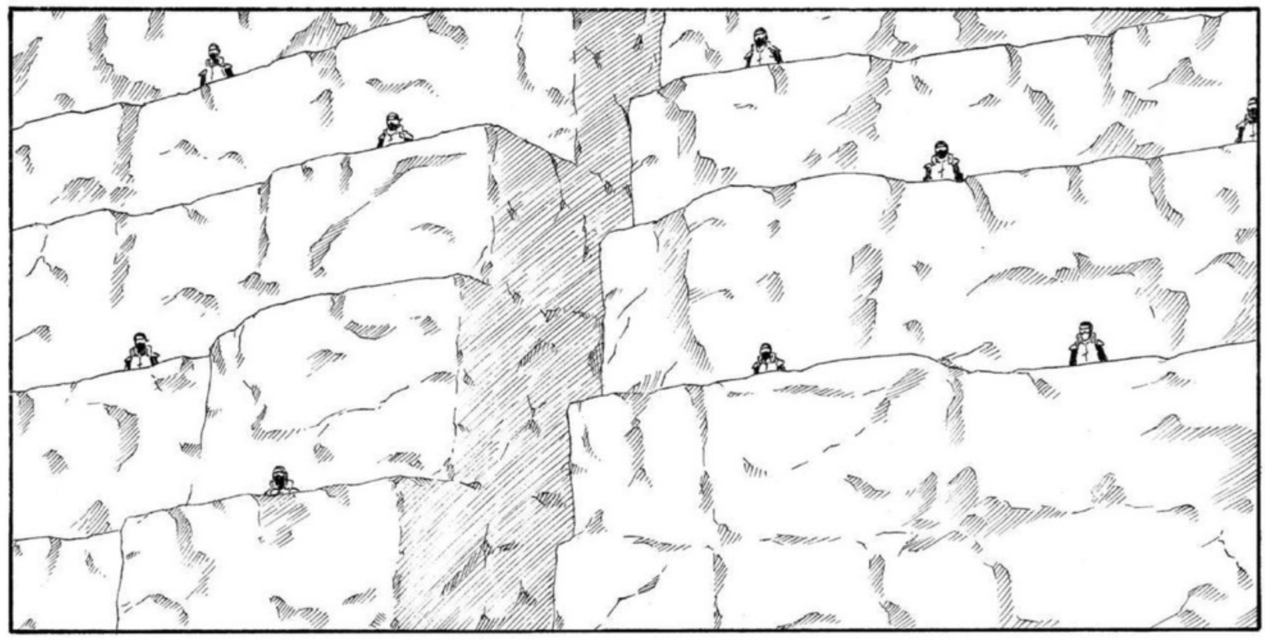

ARE OUR SECRETS SAFE WITH NO ONE?
SORRY. CAN'T BE HELPED.
ONCE I CAST THE JUTSU, THERE'S NO TELLING HOW THEY'LL TURN OUT.
DREDGE-DREDGE
FWHP
FWHP

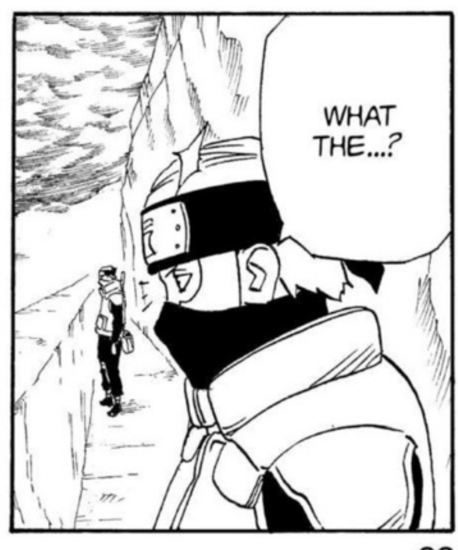


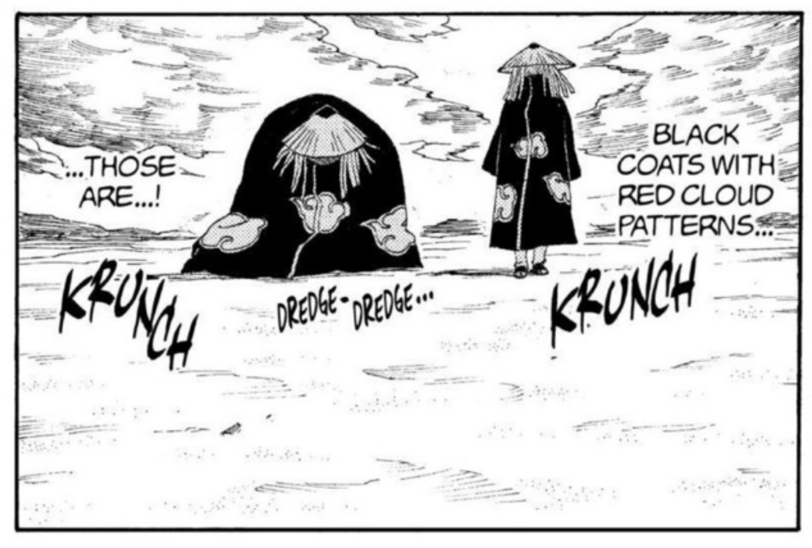

ARE YOU SURE THAT ONE BAG'S ENOUGH?
OUR OPPONENT IS A JINCHÛRIKI HOST...


MY JUTSU ARE *ALL* WORKS OF ART...BUT JUST IN CASE, I BROUGHT OHAKO, MY SPECIALTY...
SINCE OUR OPPONENT...
FFT...

...IS ONE-TAIL.
SLURP

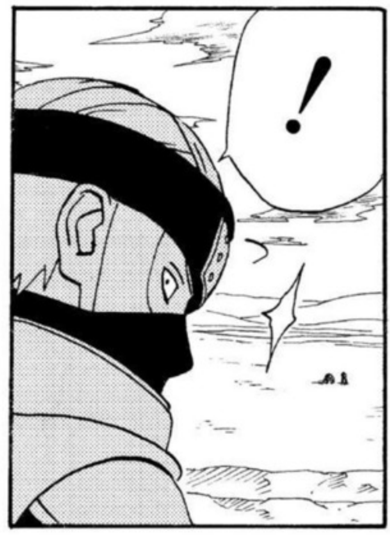



WHAT THE...?

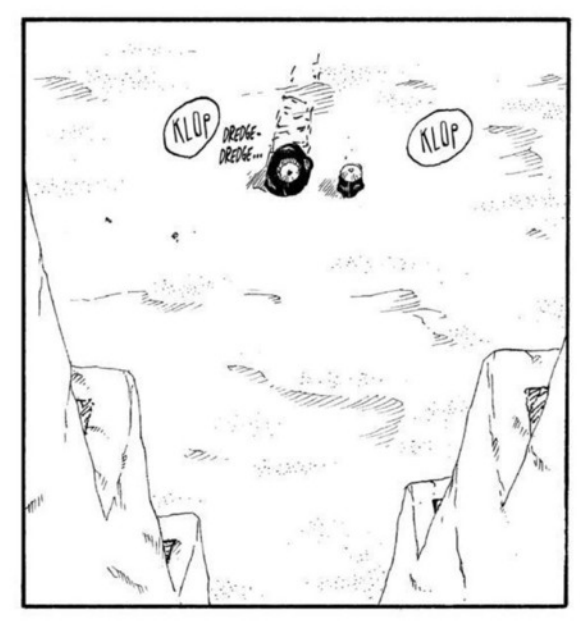

BLACK COATS WITH RED CLOUD PATTERNS...
KRUNCH
DREDGE-DREDGE...
...THOSE ARE...!
KRUNCH

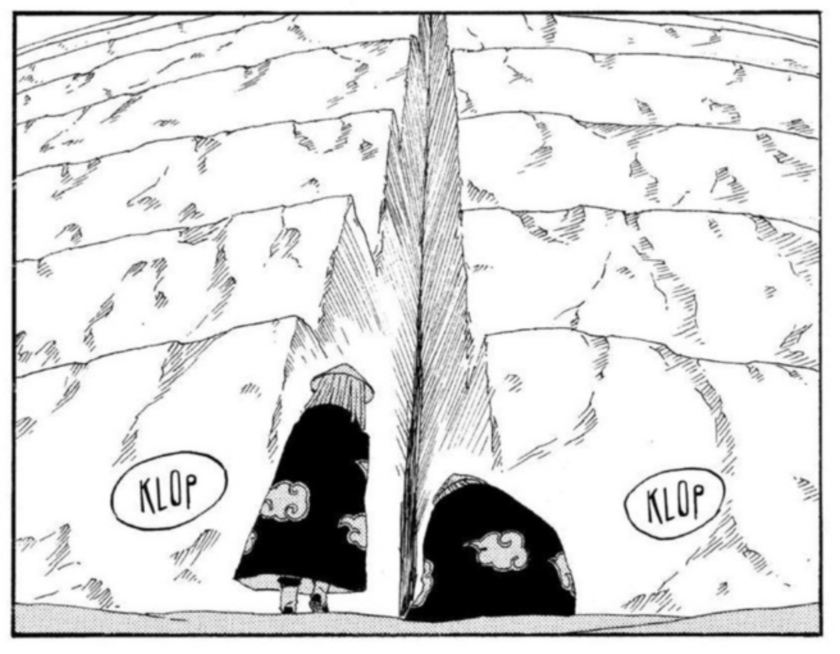

READ THIS WAY


COM-MANDER YURA!

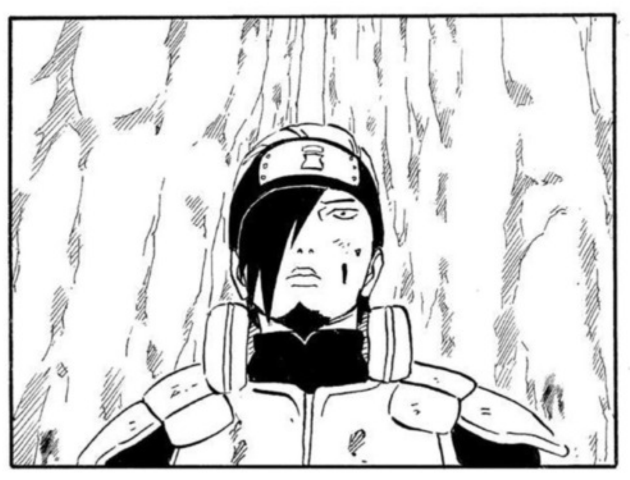

!


DO NOT WORRY... IT WILL BE OVER IN A FLASH.

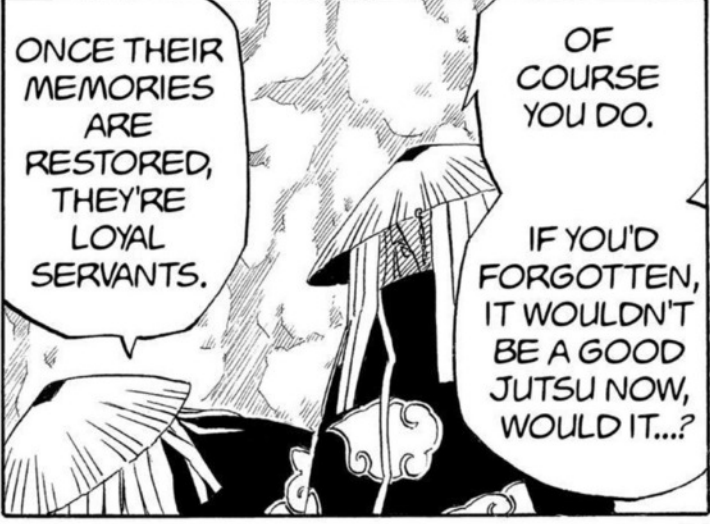

KLOP
DREDGE-DREDGE...
KLOP


KLOP
KLOP


KRUNKCH

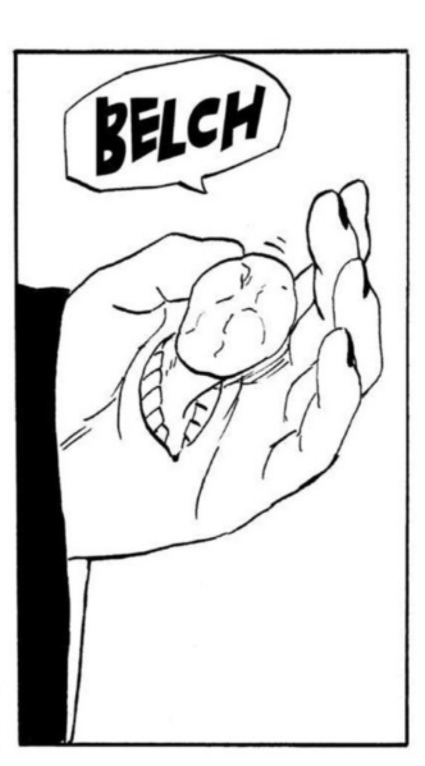



VERY GOOD... DO YOU REMEMBER ME NOW?
THUMP
YES, SIR!
OF COURSE, LORD SASORI!


OF COURSE YOU DO.
IF YOU'D FORGOTTEN, IT WOULDN'T BE A GOOD JUTSU NOW, WOULD IT...?
ONCE THEIR MEMORIES ARE RESTORED, THEY'RE LOYAL SERVANTS.

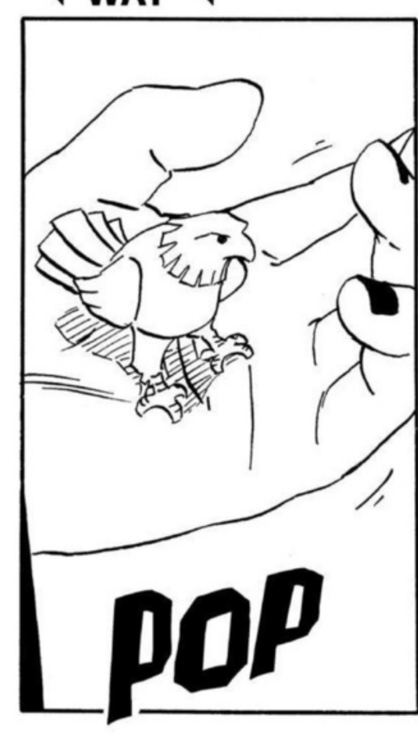

LET'S GET TO IT, THEN...
GNAW GNAW
FFT...

READ THIS WAY











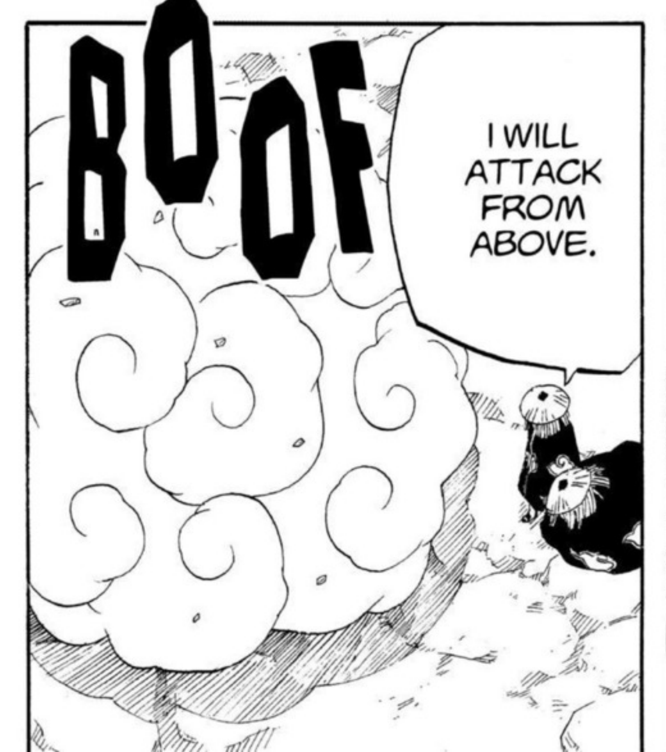













SHOOF
FLIP
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MY ARTISTIC CREATION, HMMM?
JUST DON'T KEEP ME WAITING.
ONE-TAILED SHUKAKU'S HOST, GAARA OF THE SAND...
...SHOW ME YOUR ART...

## THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
## MY PERSONAL HISTORY, VIDEO GAMES PART 2

AS I PREVIOUSLY WROTE IN VOLUME 25, I ESPECIALLY LIKED CARTRIDGE GAMES, SUCH AS "THE LEGEND OF ZELDA," "ZELDA 2: ADVENTURE OF LINK," "THE MYSTERIOUS CASTLE MURASAME," "KID ICARUS," "CASTLEVANIA," AND "METROID." YOU COULD SAVE AND RELOAD THESE GAMES, WHICH, FOR ME BACK THEN, WAS TREMENDOUSLY APPEALING. RECENTLY, MANY OF THESE GAMES WERE RE-RELEASED FOR THE GAME BOY, SO I DECIDED TO TRY THEM OUT AGAIN... I WAS PLEASANTLY SURPRISED TO DISCOVER THEY WERE STILL QUITE FUN. IN FACT, I BEAT THEM ALL (ALTHOUGH BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE A LOT OF FREE TIME, I WAS ONLY PLAYING THEM SPORADICALLY).

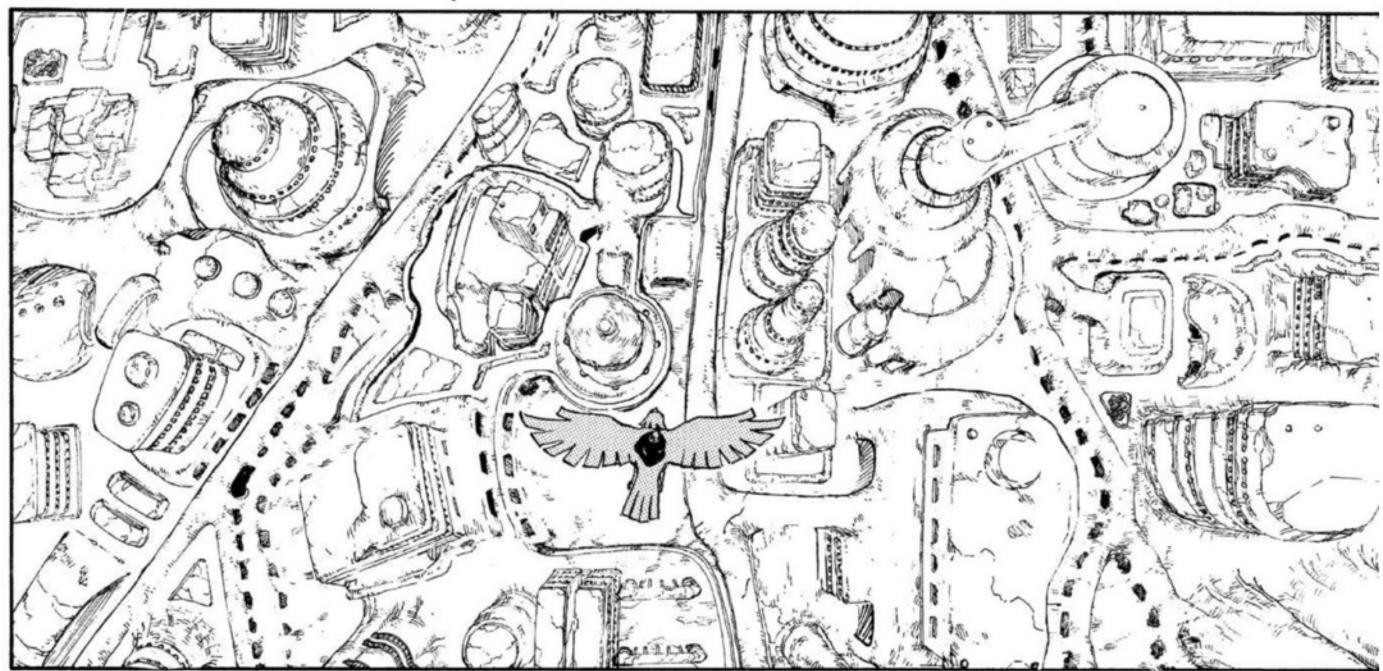
MOST OF MY CURRENT ASSISTANTS ARE ALSO OF THE FAMICOM GENERATION, SO WE OFTEN REMINISCE ABOUT THAT ERA, HAVING DISCUSSIONS LIKE, "REMEMBER HOW WE HAD TO 'RIOT' WITH JUST TWO CHARACTERS," OR "IN MISSISSIPPI ["MURDER ON THE MISSISSIPPI"], REMEMBER HOW YOU COULD KILL WITH JUST A SINGLE KNIFE THRUST," AND SO ON. AT SOME POINT, THE CONVERSATION WOULD ALWAYS TURN TO EITHER TO *DRAGON QUEST* OR THE *FINAL FANTASY* SERIES (I BET IT'S TRUE FOR YOU ALL AS WELL). WITH ONLY PARTIAL ALLEGIANCES--I.E. FF FANS WHO STILL LIKE DQ AND DQ FANS WHO STILL OWN FF GAMES--THERE EMERGE SOME BIZARRE COMMENTS. AS THE TALK GETS MORE AND MORE HEATED, SOMEONE WILL INVARIABLY SHOUT OUT, "SO WHAT ABOUT YOU, KISHIMOTO-SAN?"

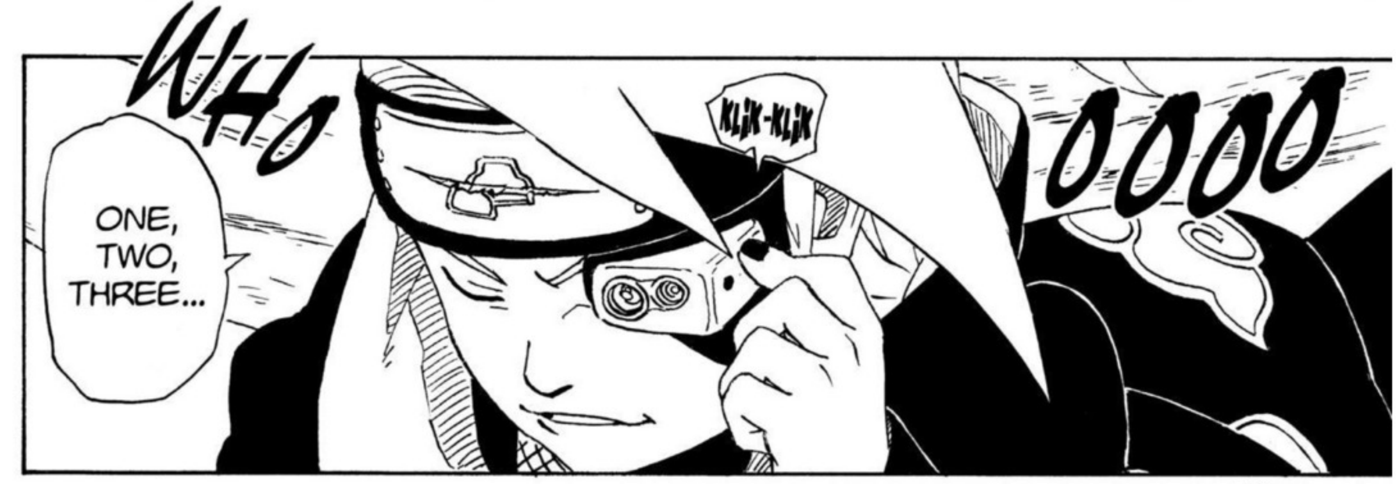
AND MY REPLY WOULD BE, "I LOVE TORIYAMA-SENSEI'S ART, AND THE VERY FIRST GAME I EVER BOUGHT WAS DRAGON QUEST, SO I WANT TO SAY I'M A DQ FAN... BUT I WAS ALSO DRAWN TO FF BECAUSE OF ITS GLITCHES, LIKE THE ABILITY TO LEVEL-UP BY ATTACKING ONE'S ALLIES IN FFII AND TO CANCEL ATTACKS BY PRESSING THE A AND B BUTTONS SIMULTANEOUSLY. IN FFIV, THE LITTLE TWINS PALOM AND POROM MADE ME CRY EVEN THOUGH IT WAS A GAME. THE TRANSITION FROM PIXEL ART TO POLYGONAL 3D, COMPUTER GRAPHICS IN FFVII WAS SO GROUNDBREAKING THAT I CAN'T DENY THAT I LOVE FF AS WELL. SO AM I A FF MANIAC? ...YET DQ WAS SO BALANCED TOO. I LOVED HOW PRINCE SAMANTORIA OF DQII--WHO ALWAYS DIED SO EASILY--WAS ABLE TO MASTER THE ZAORIKU, OR REVIVE SPELL. AND EVEN THOUGH THE "SPELL OF RESURRECTION" WAS REALLY LONG, THE MUSIC THAT PLAYED DURING THE PASSWORD SCREEN BECAME MY FAVORITE OF THE DQ SERIES. BUT THEN, DQI~III'S "LEGEND OF THE HERO LOTO", IS A THREE-PART WORK THAT REALLY WAS A CLASSIC FOR ME TOO.

...SO IT'S REALLY HARD FOR ME TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE TWO. AND MY ASSISTANTS, TOO, THEY ALWAYS END UP GIVING VAGUE ANSWERS AS WELL. SO THE DEBATE IS USUALLY SETTLED WITH MUTUAL ADMIRATION FOR AND AGREEMENT ABOUT HOW INCREDIBLE THE COLLABORATION PROJECT GAME "CHRONO TRIGGER" WAS. WE ALL JUST LOVE VIDEO GAMES.

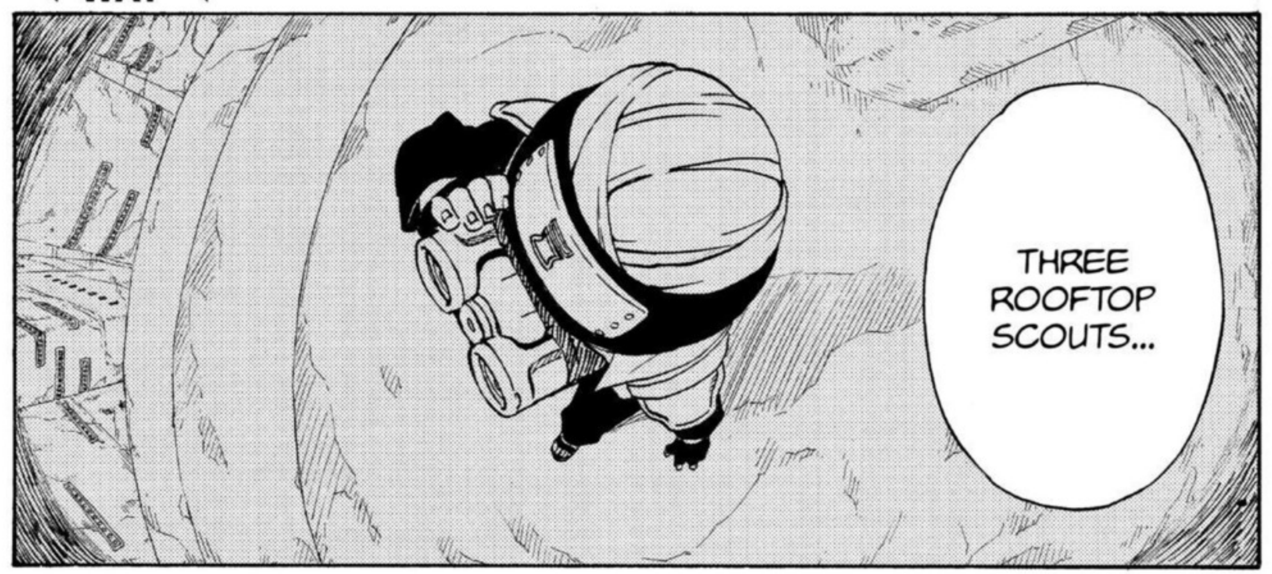

Number 248:
The Sand Strike Back...!!

WHOOOOO

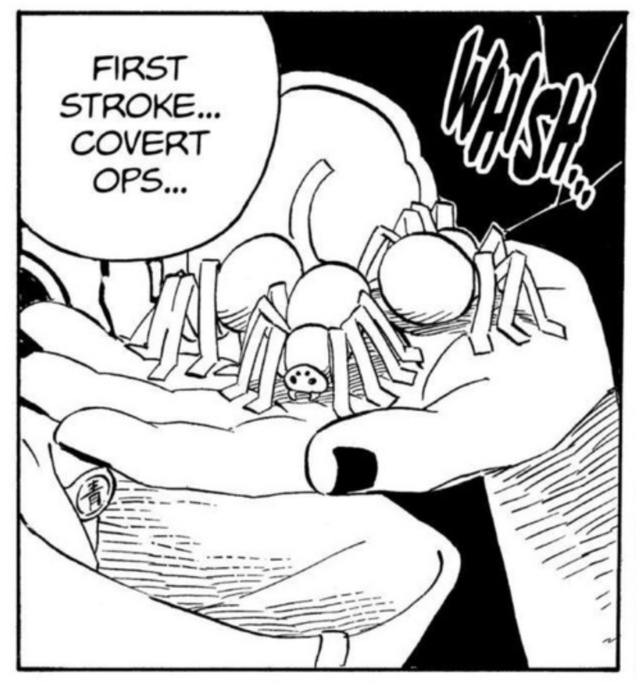




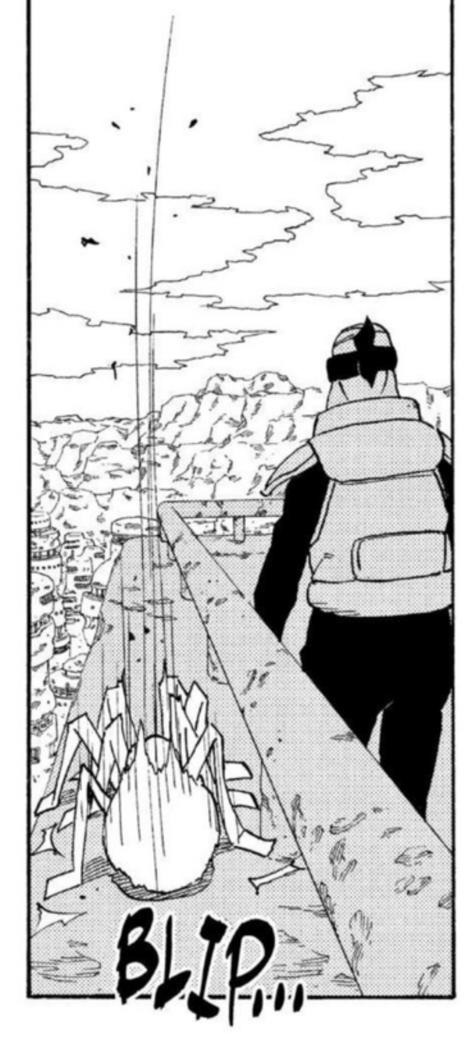

READ THIS WAY

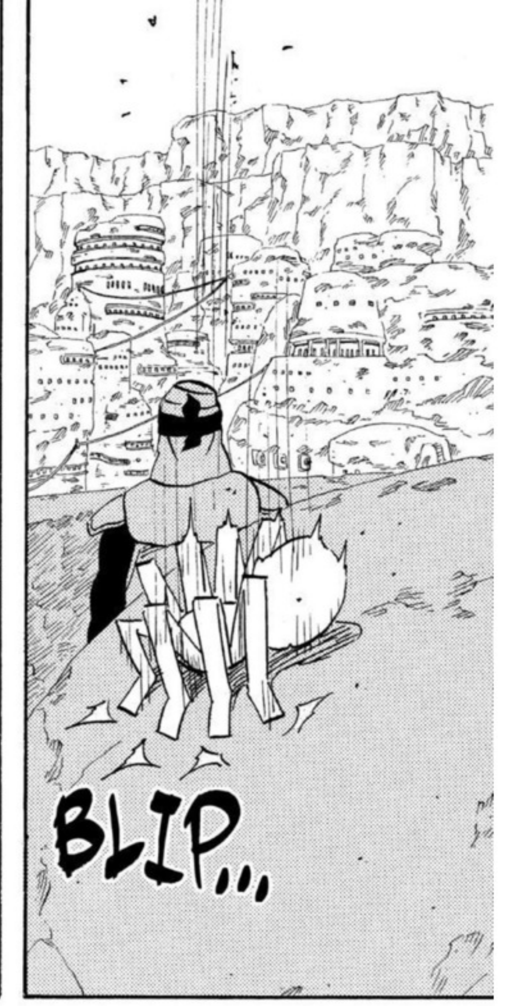
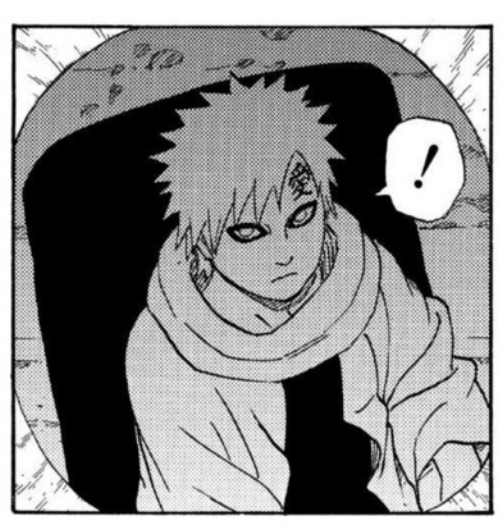
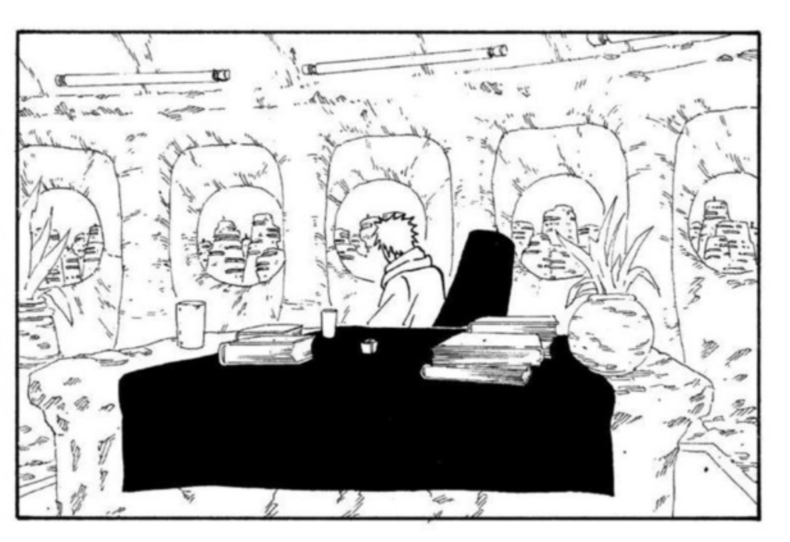
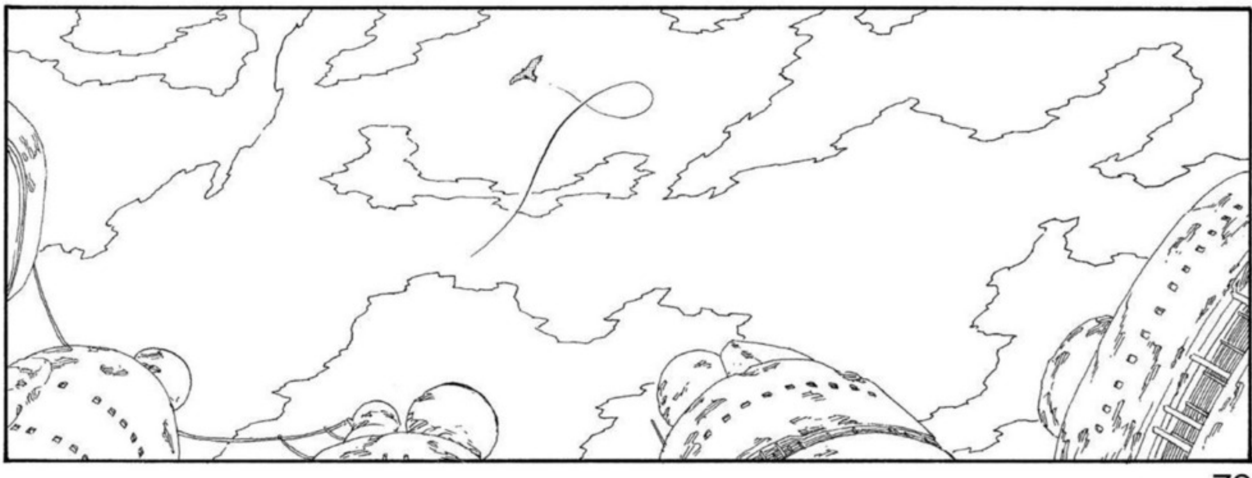

THREE ROOFTOP SCOUTS...


THE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN OF THIS VILLAGE IS SURPRISINGLY TASTEFUL...
ALL THE MORE PLEASING TO DESTROY IT THEN, *HMMM?!*
RUSTLE


WHISH...
FIRST STROKE... COVERT OPS...

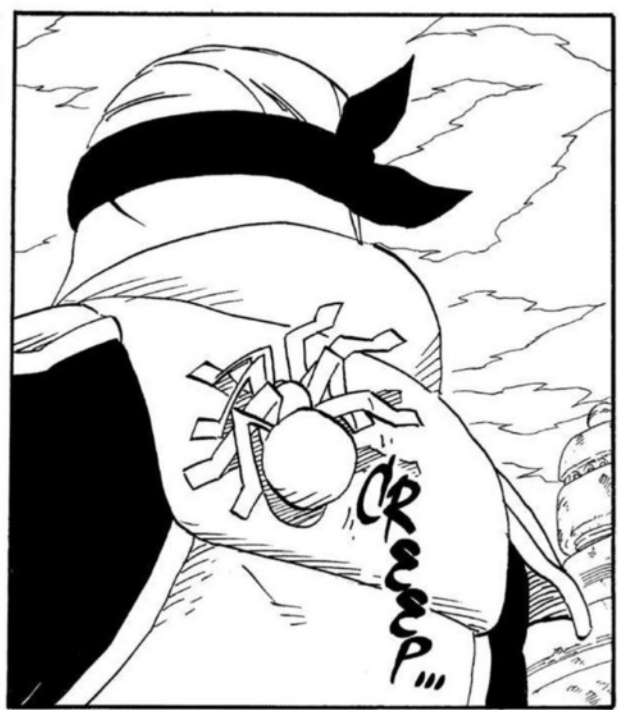

FLIP...
SHWUP
POOF
POOF
POOF


BLIP...

BLIP...

BLIP...

!




READ THIS WAY


!
WH...WHAT'S THIS WEIRD THING?!
SKRIT


CREEEP...


WHAP
!!


"THING"...? PHILISTINE!
SOME PEOPLE WOULDN'T KNOW TRUE ART IF IT BIT THEM IN THE FACE.


UGGH!
FLAIL
BUT I'LL SHOW YOU TRUE ART...
FLAIL


CROUCH...

TRUE ART IS REVOLUTIONARY... INCENDIARY...
YEEAAGH
...AN EXPLOSION!
BO
OM




HEE HEE HEE...

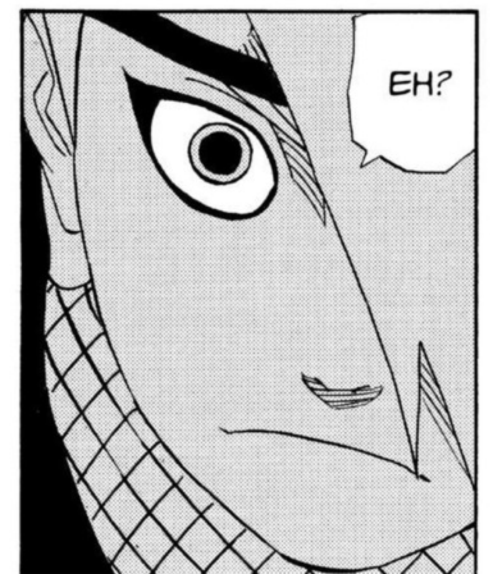
POOO

SWOOO

SHOOF

THUMP



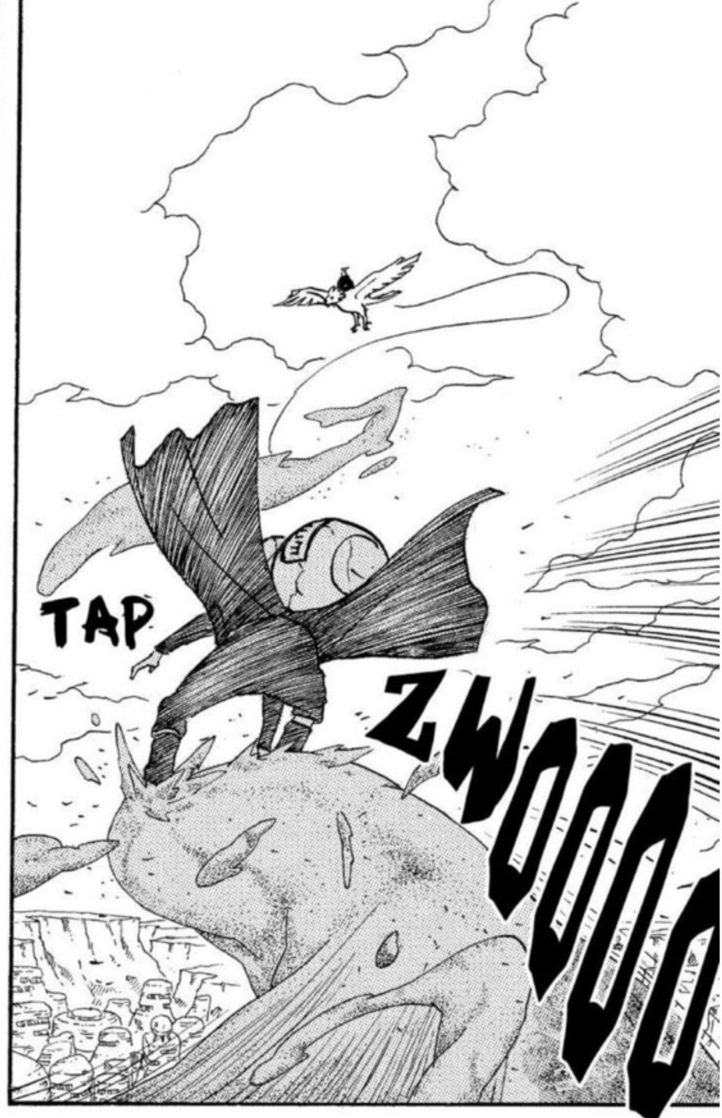

WHOA.




SHOOM

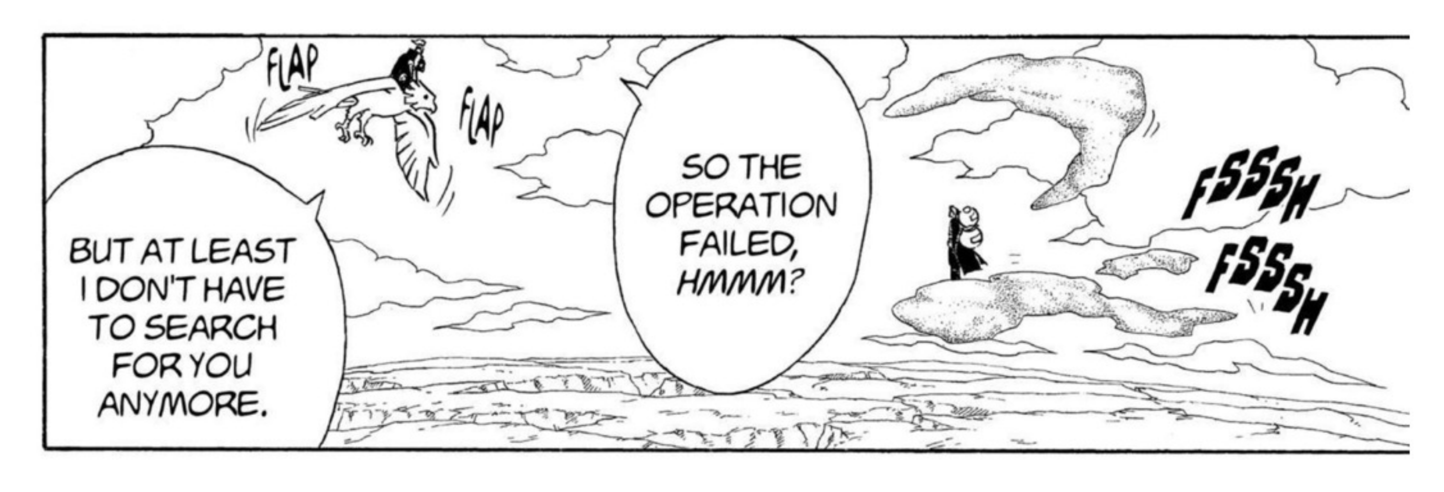
READ THIS WAY




TAP
ZWOOOOO

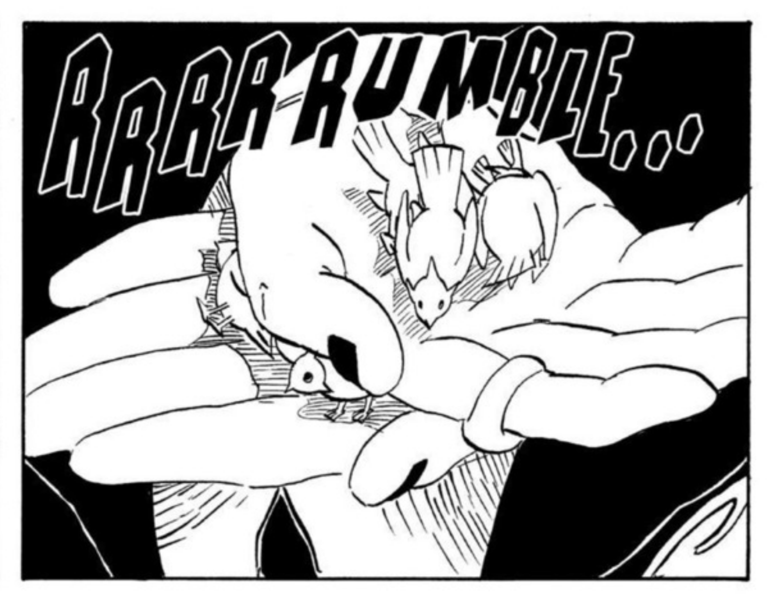

HO... THAT'S QUITE USEFUL...
BUT HOW DID YOU KNOW, *HMMM?*
GNAW GNAW

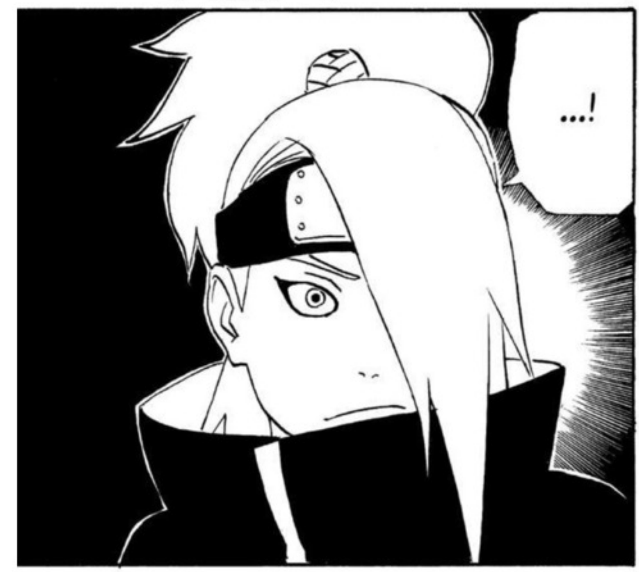

THERE ARE NO SUCH BIRDS...
...IN THIS DESERT.
RISE...


FSSSH
FSSSH
SO THE OPERATION FAILED, *HMMM?*
FLAP
FLAP
BUT AT LEAST I DON'T HAVE TO SEARCH FOR YOU ANYMORE.


SWOO...
SWOO...




BLAST

AH! AN INGENIOUS USE OF THE TOPO-GRAPHY...

AT LAST, AN AUDIENCE *WORTHY* OF MY ART!




DON'T GET SO HUNG UP ON RANK, NARUTO.
YOU'VE BEEN TRAINING UNDER LORD JIRAIYA. THAT COUNTS FOR A LOT MORE.
YEAH, I GUESS SO...
...BUT MASTER IRUKA, THAT PERVY SAGE, HE DOESN'T HOLD BACK!


REMEMBER THAT HEADBAND YOU GAVE ME? THE CLOTH PART WAS RUINED.
MY CLOTHES, TOO!


CLOTHES CAN BE REPLACED.
THE TRAINING YOU'VE ENDURED CANNOT. WHY, JUST LOOK AT HOW *STRONG* YOU'VE BECOME!


YEAH!
I MIGHT EVEN BE STRONGER THAN YOU NOW, MASTER!
HEH... DON'T PUSH IT, KID...


READ THIS WAY

OH! HEY!
DID YOU HEAR? GAARA OF THE SAND IS KAZEKAGE!!
WELL... HE ALWAYS *WAS* SPECIAL.
BOM
BOM
VOOSH
STRANGE EXPLOSIVES...
...PRECISION-GUIDED...
FOOSH
FOOSH

ZWHOOOOSH
SKIM


FLIT...


WHIP
WHIP


THESE NEXT ONES ARE FAST, HMMM?!
SHWUP


POOF
POOF




SKEEET

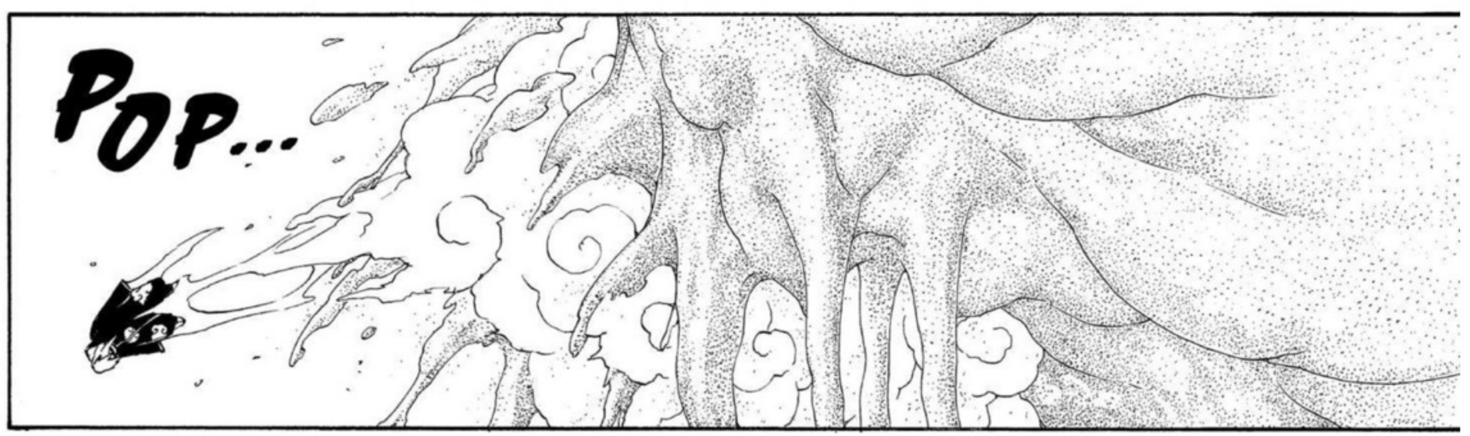






...!
WHOOOOSH...
HE SHIELDED HIMSELF.
...LIKE A PROTECTIVE EGGSHELL.
!!
SLITHER
VOOSH
SABAKURO! SAND PRISON!!

ROSH
THIS IS NOT GOOD...
BLAST

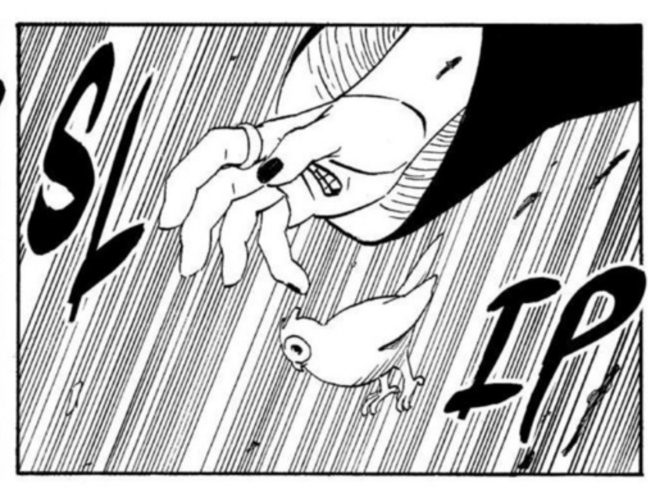



!
SWISH


SPLAT
THE COFFIN OF CRUSHING SAND!
CLENCH...
!!
CRUSH...

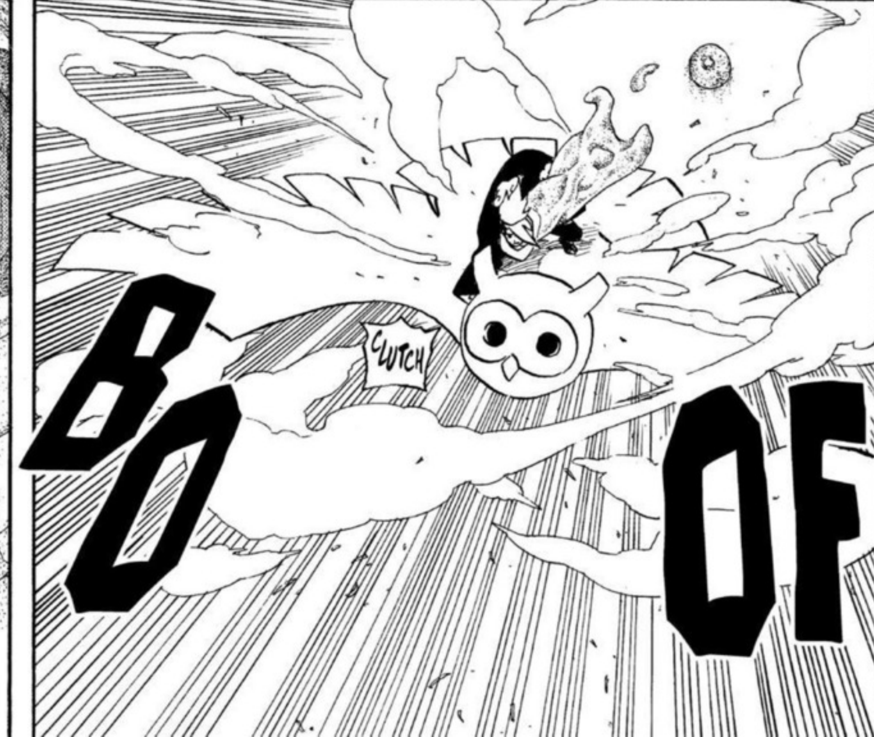

NARUTO

# Number 249: The Kazekage Stands Tall...!!









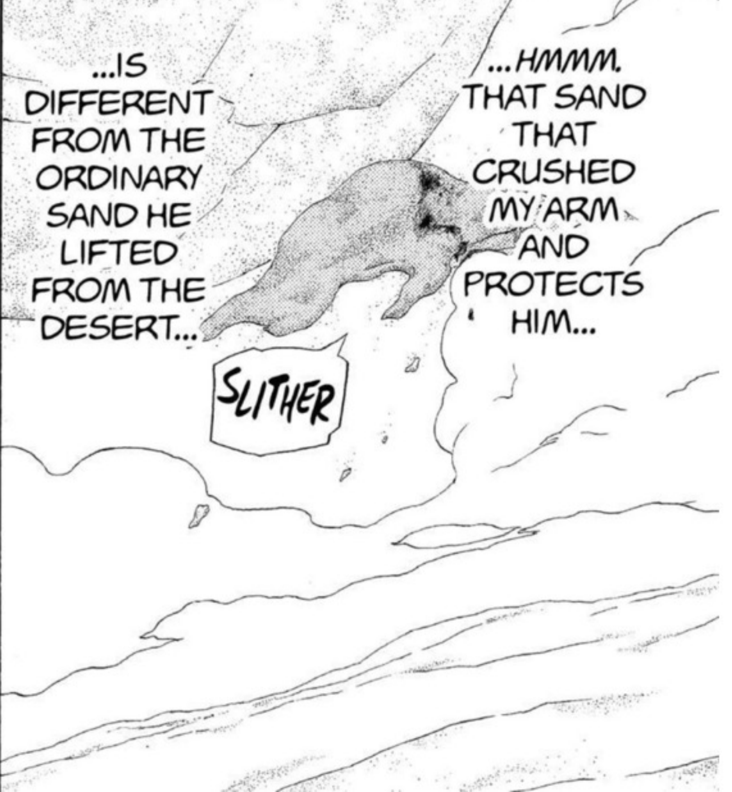


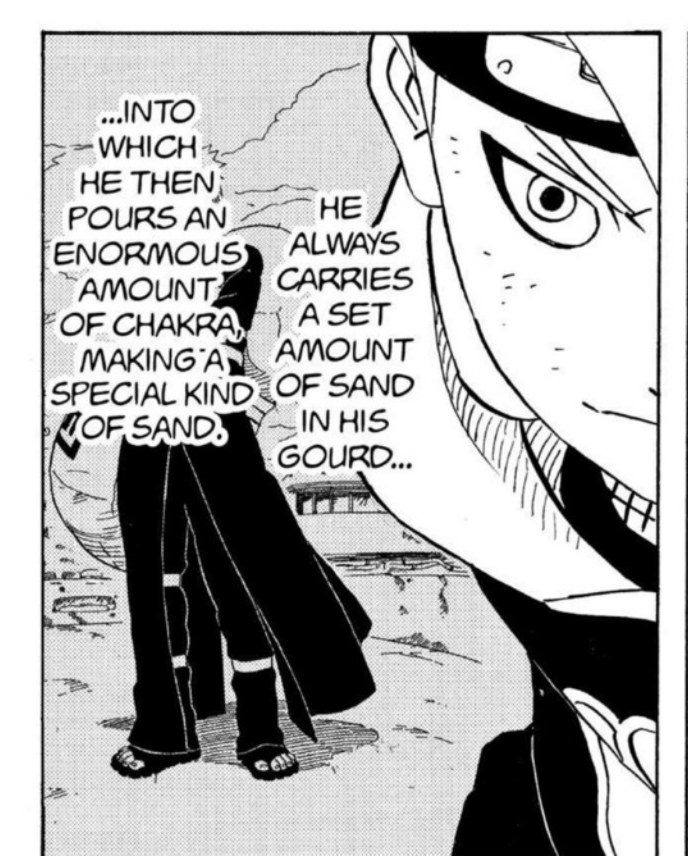


YANK


WHOOSH...


HE'S GOOD, HMMM ?!"
...BUT I'M ALMOST OUT OF CLAY... ONLY HAVE ENOUGH FOR ONE MORE ATTACK...
RUSTLE

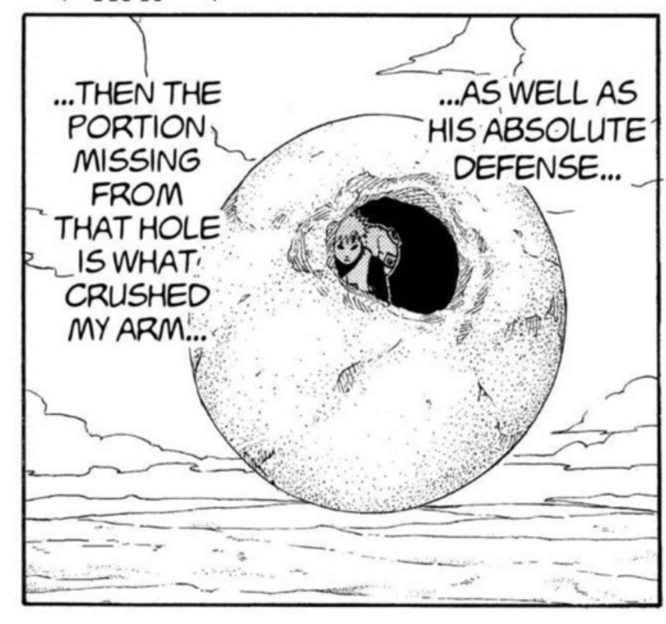

...HMMM. THAT SAND THAT CRUSHED MY ARM AND PROTECTS HIM...
...IS DIFFERENT FROM THE ORDINARY SAND HE LIFTED FROM THE DESERT...
SLITHER


HE ALWAYS CARRIES A SET AMOUNT OF SAND IN HIS GOURD...
...INTO WHICH HE THEN POURS AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF CHAKRA, MAKING A SPECIAL KIND OF SAND.



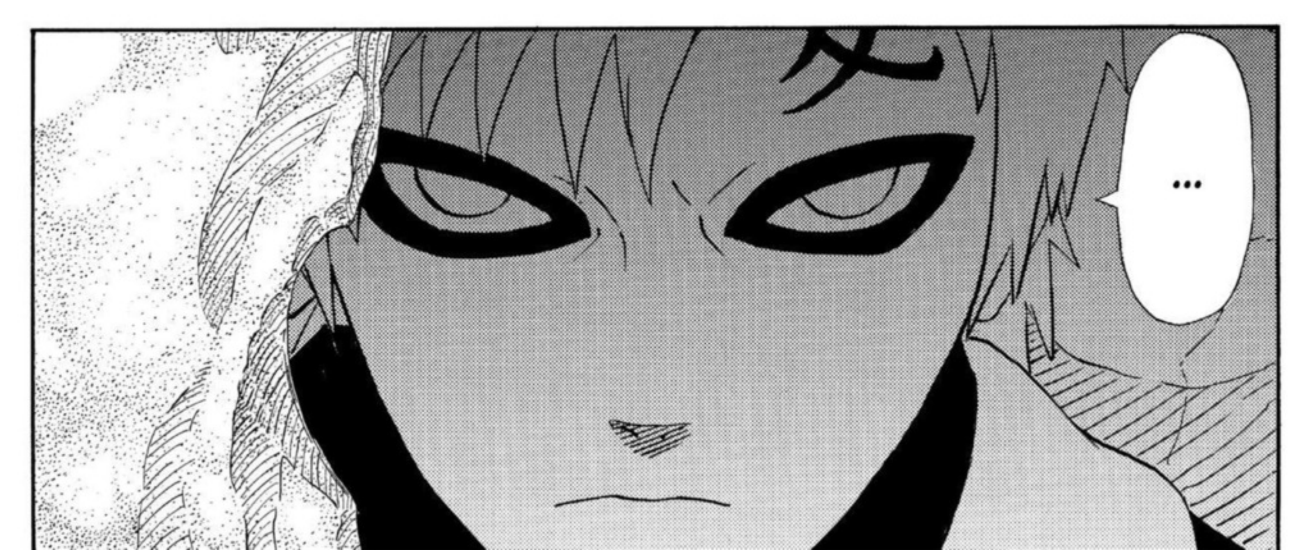


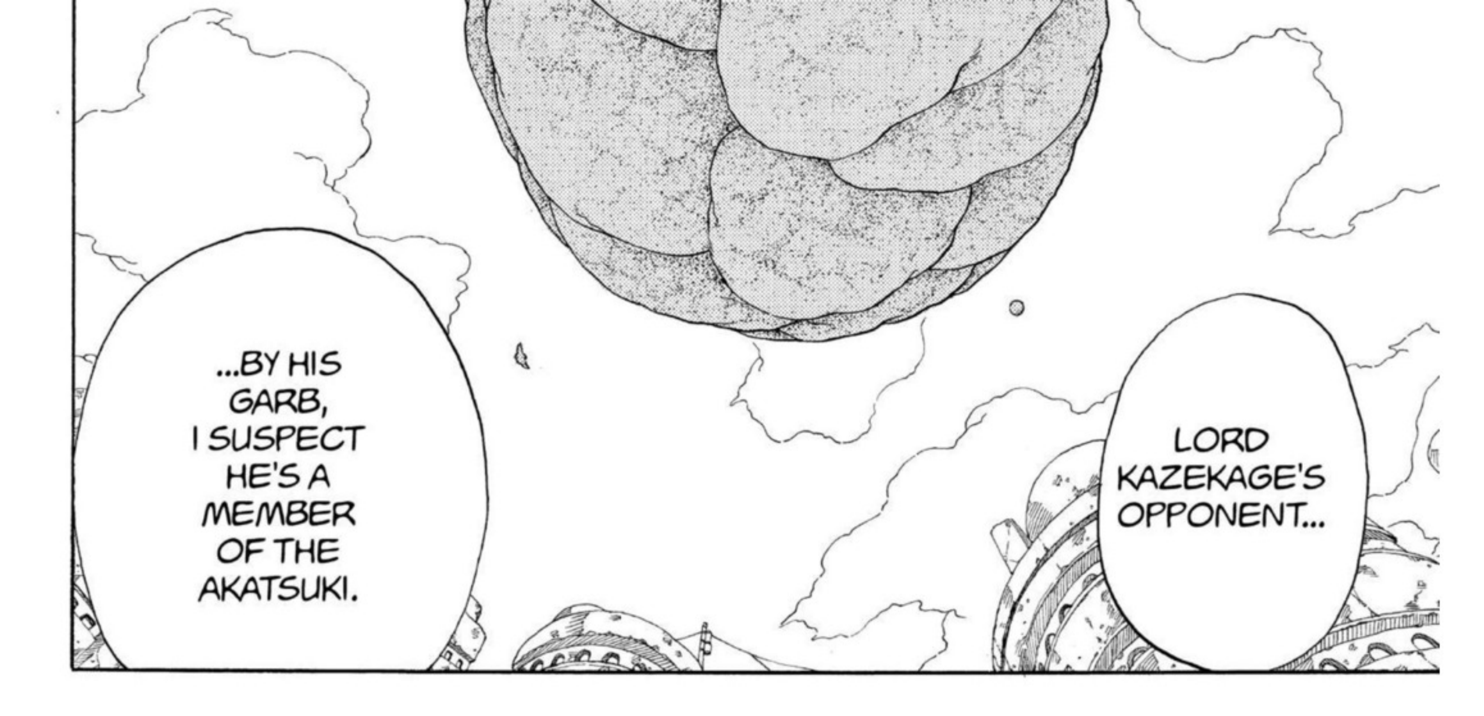





...MY OHAKO CAN EXPLOIT IT...

HOIST...




LORD KAZEKAGE'S OPPONENT...
...BY HIS GARB, I SUSPECT HE'S A MEMBER OF THE AKATSUKI.

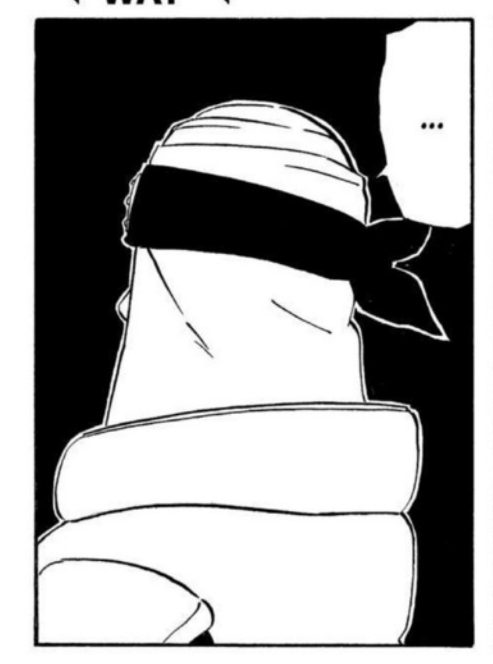

PREPARE FOR BATTLE, NOW!
MEDICAL CORPS, ERECT A SHIELD AND EVACUATE ALL NON-COMBATANTS WITHIN!
WE MUST COVER LORD KAZEKAGE!

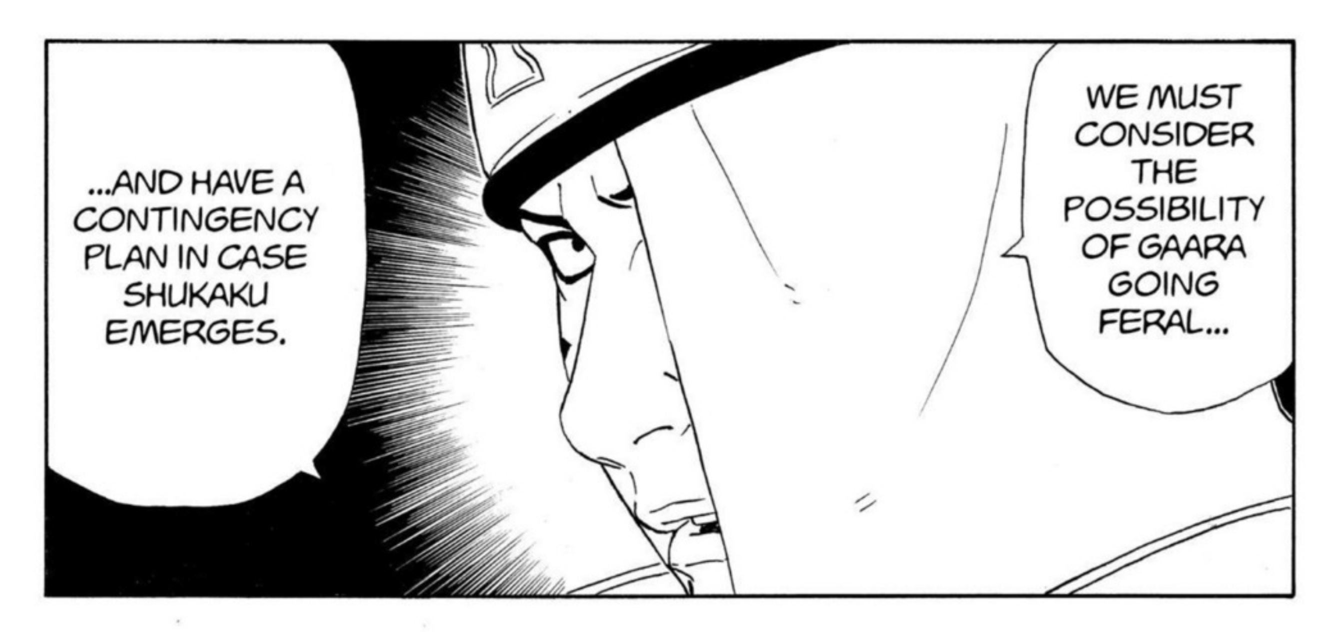

I THOUGHT SO...


YES, SIR!


READ THIS WAY


KANKURO...
SIR?


...


WE MUST CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF GAARA GOING FERAL...
...AND HAVE A CONTINGENCY PLAN IN CASE SHUKAKU EMERGES.



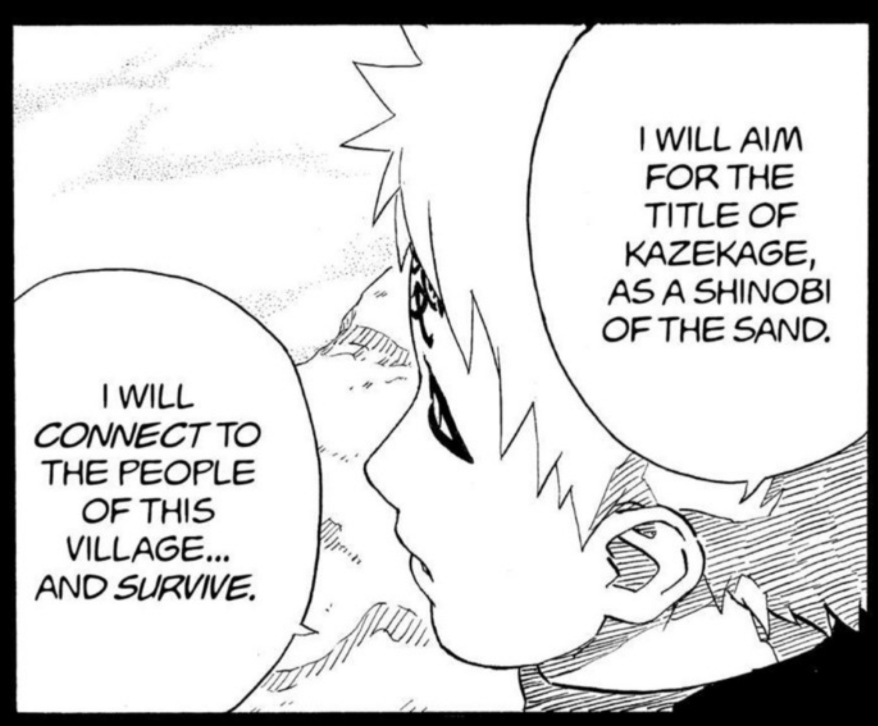

COME ON, NO WAY...
...GAARA WOULDN'T HURT ANY VILLAGERS...



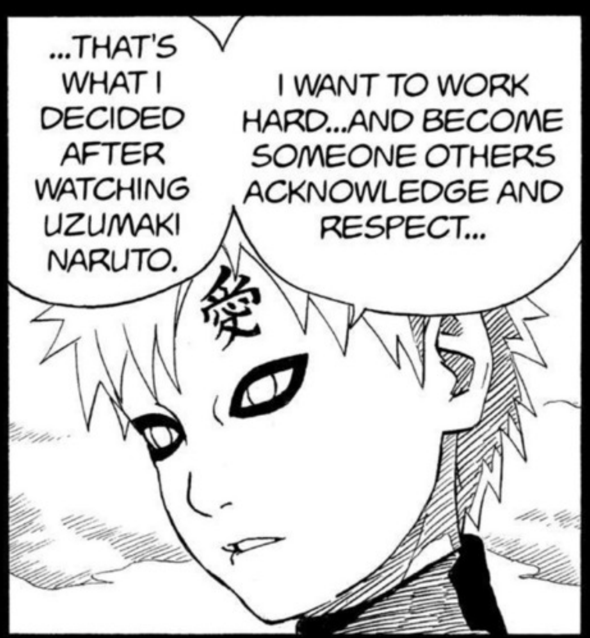


I DON'T REALLY WANT TO SAY THIS, BUT...
...YOU'RE NO MORE THAN A WEAPON OF MASS TERROR TO THE VILLAGE.
FOR YOU TO SPLIT OFF FROM US NOW AND ENTER THE REGULAR TROOPS... IT'LL ONLY BE HARDER ON YOU.
IT'S FULL OF JÔNIN WHO THINK POORLY OF YOU...
...AND MOST OF THE VILLAGE FEARS YOU, TOO...
...
I DON'T CARE...
...DOING NOTHING WILL ONLY BRING EVEN GREATER PAIN.
I KNOW WHAT I MUST DO, KANKURO.
I MUST CLEAR MY OWN PATH.
PERHAPS THEN... SOMEDAY... I CAN BE LIKE *HIM*...

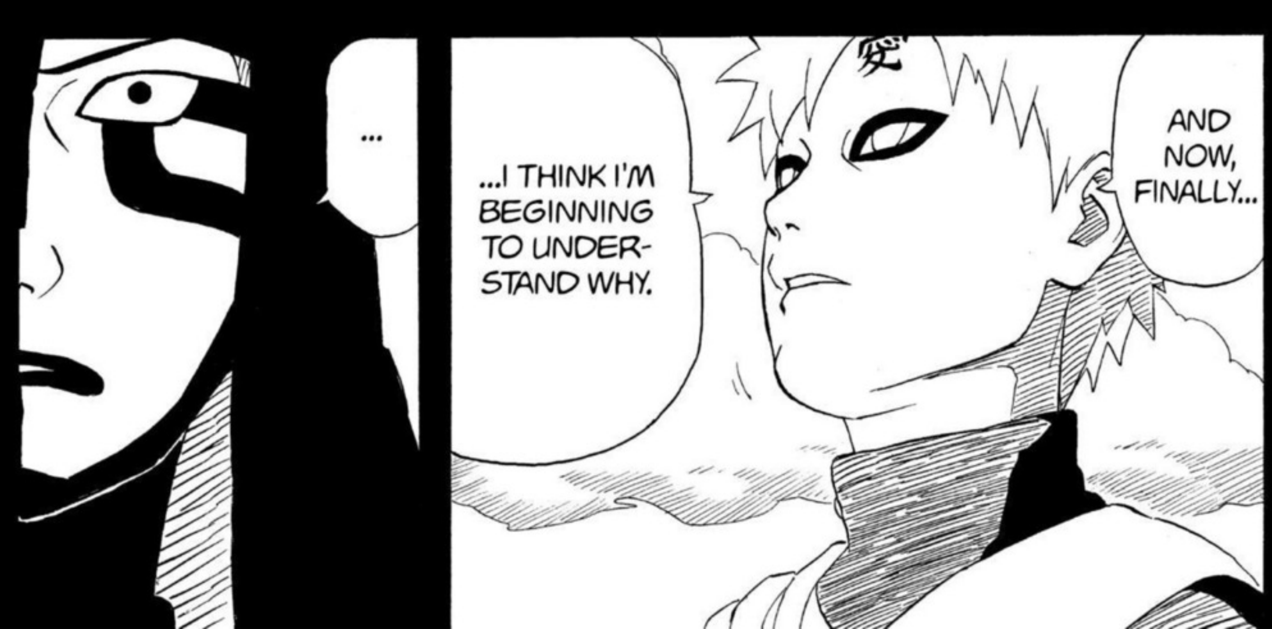

READ THIS WAY

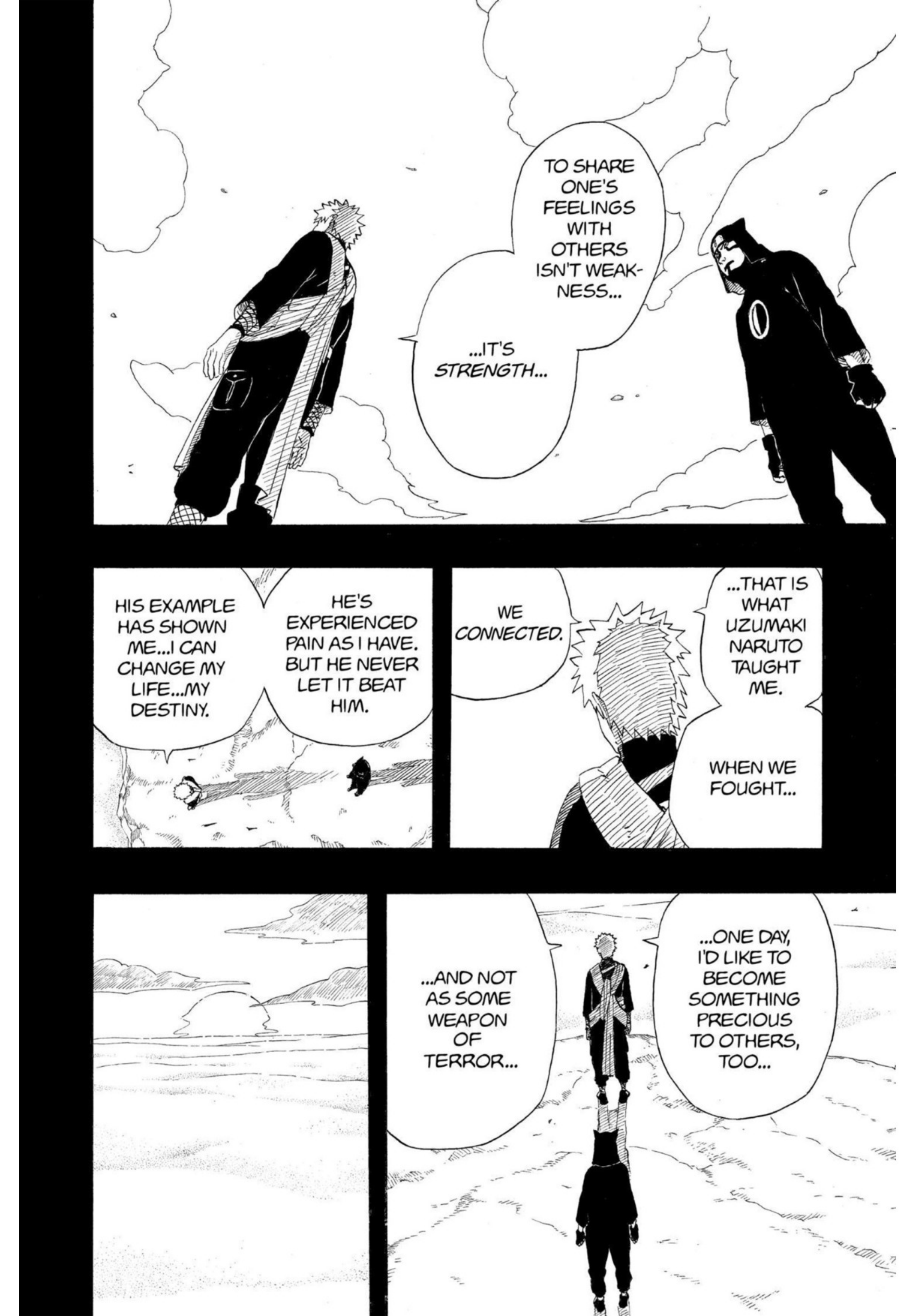

I WILL AIM FOR THE TITLE OF KAZEKAGE, AS A SHINOBI OF THE SAND.
I WILL *CONNECT* TO THE PEOPLE OF THIS VILLAGE... AND *SURVIVE.*


...
GAARA ...

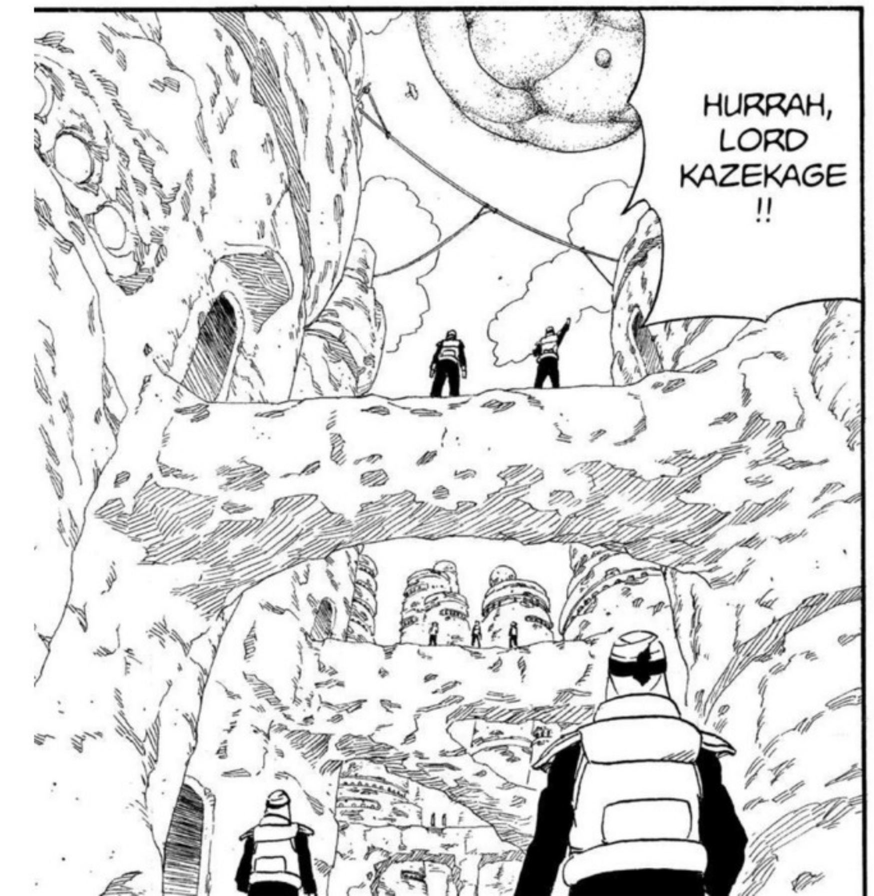

I WANT TO WORK HARD...AND BECOME SOMEONE OTHERS ACKNOWLEDGE AND RESPECT...
...THAT'S WHAT I DECIDED AFTER WATCHING UZUMAKI NARUTO.


UNTIL I MET HIM, TIES TO OTHERS...
...ONLY EVER BROUGHT ME PAIN AND SORROW.
BUT HE KEPT ASKING...KEPT *PUSHING ME...*
...TO RE-DEFINE THOSE TIES...


AND NOW, FINALLY...
...I THINK I'M BEGINNING TO UNDER-STAND WHY.
...

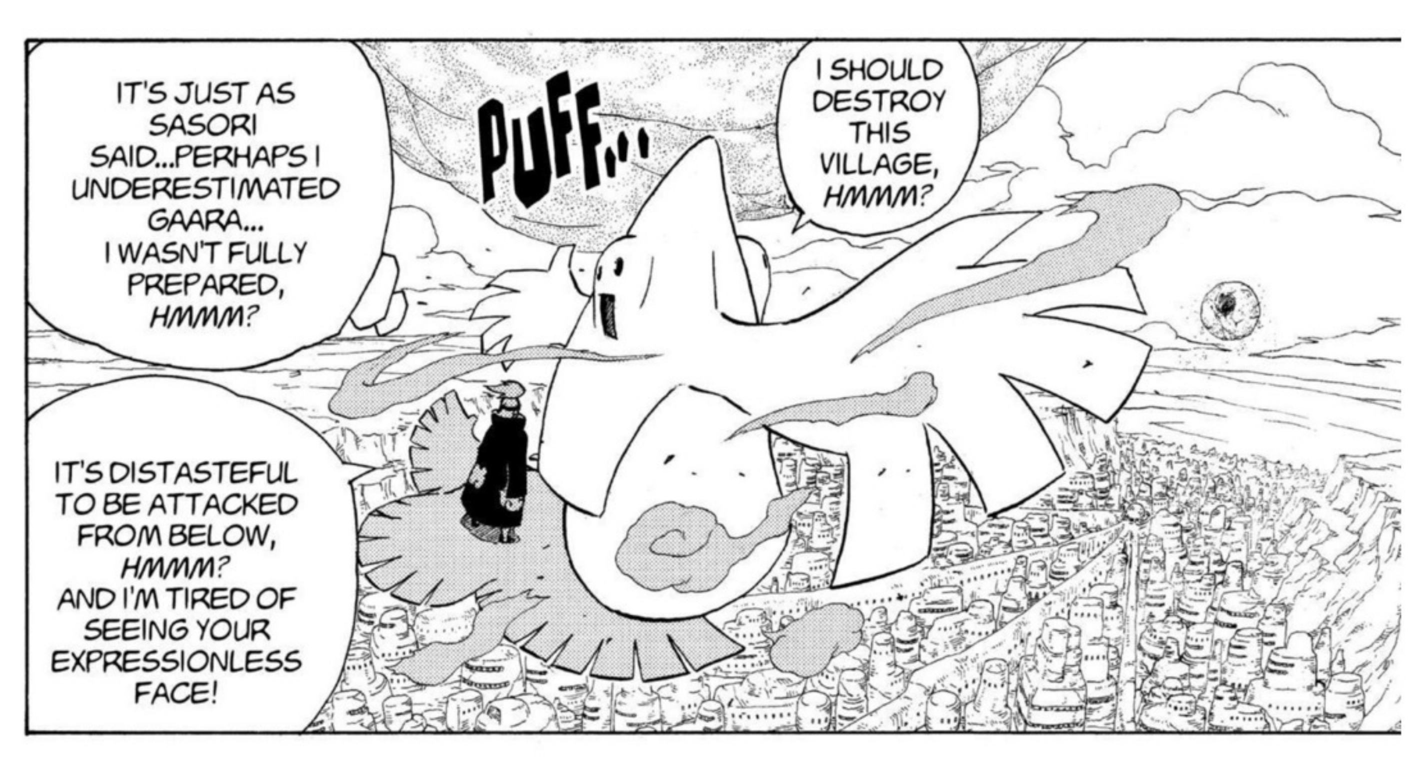

TO SHARE ONE'S FEELINGS WITH OTHERS ISN'T WEAKNESS...
...IT'S STRENGTH...
...THAT IS WHAT UZUMAKI NARUTO TAUGHT ME.
WHEN WE FOUGHT...
WE CONNECTED.
HE'S EXPERIENCED PAIN AS I HAVE. BUT HE NEVER LET IT BEAT HIM.
HIS EXAMPLE HAS SHOWN ME...I CAN CHANGE MY LIFE...MY DESTINY.
...ONE DAY, I'D LIKE TO BECOME SOMETHING PRECIOUS TO OTHERS, TOO...
...AND NOT AS SOME WEAPON OF TERROR...

...BUT AS KAZEKAGE.

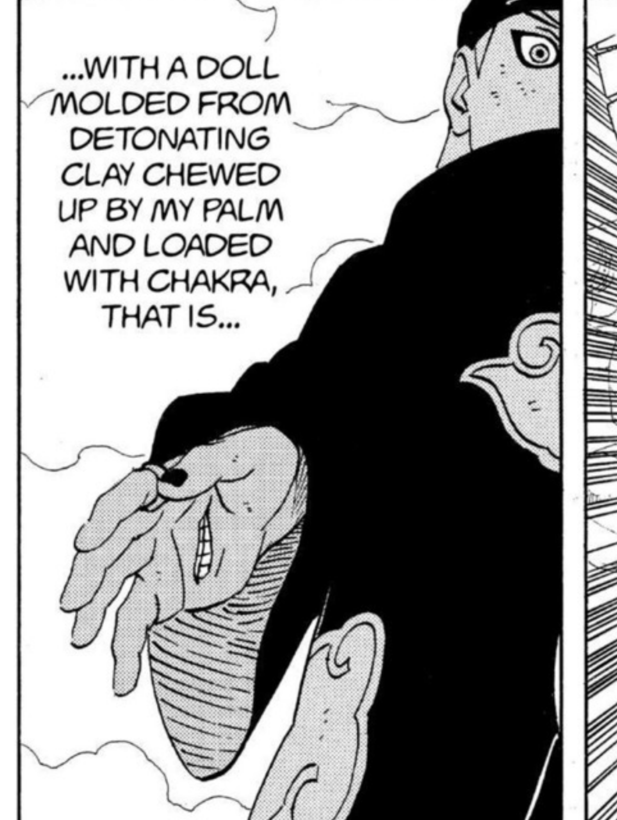








I SHOULD DESTROY THIS VILLAGE, HMMM?
PUFF...
IT'S JUST AS SASORI SAID...PERHAPS I UNDERESTIMATED GAARA... I WASN'T FULLY PREPARED, HMMM?
IT'S DISTASTEFUL TO BE ATTACKED FROM BELOW, HMMM? AND I'M TIRED OF SEEING YOUR EXPRESSIONLESS FACE!


FWOOOOO


...WITH A DOLL MOLDED FROM DETONATING CLAY CHEWED UP BY MY PALM AND LOADED WITH CHAKRA, THAT IS...

AMONG ALL MY DOLLS, OHAKO IS MY PRIZE MASTERPIECE, CONTAINING C3 CHAKRA.





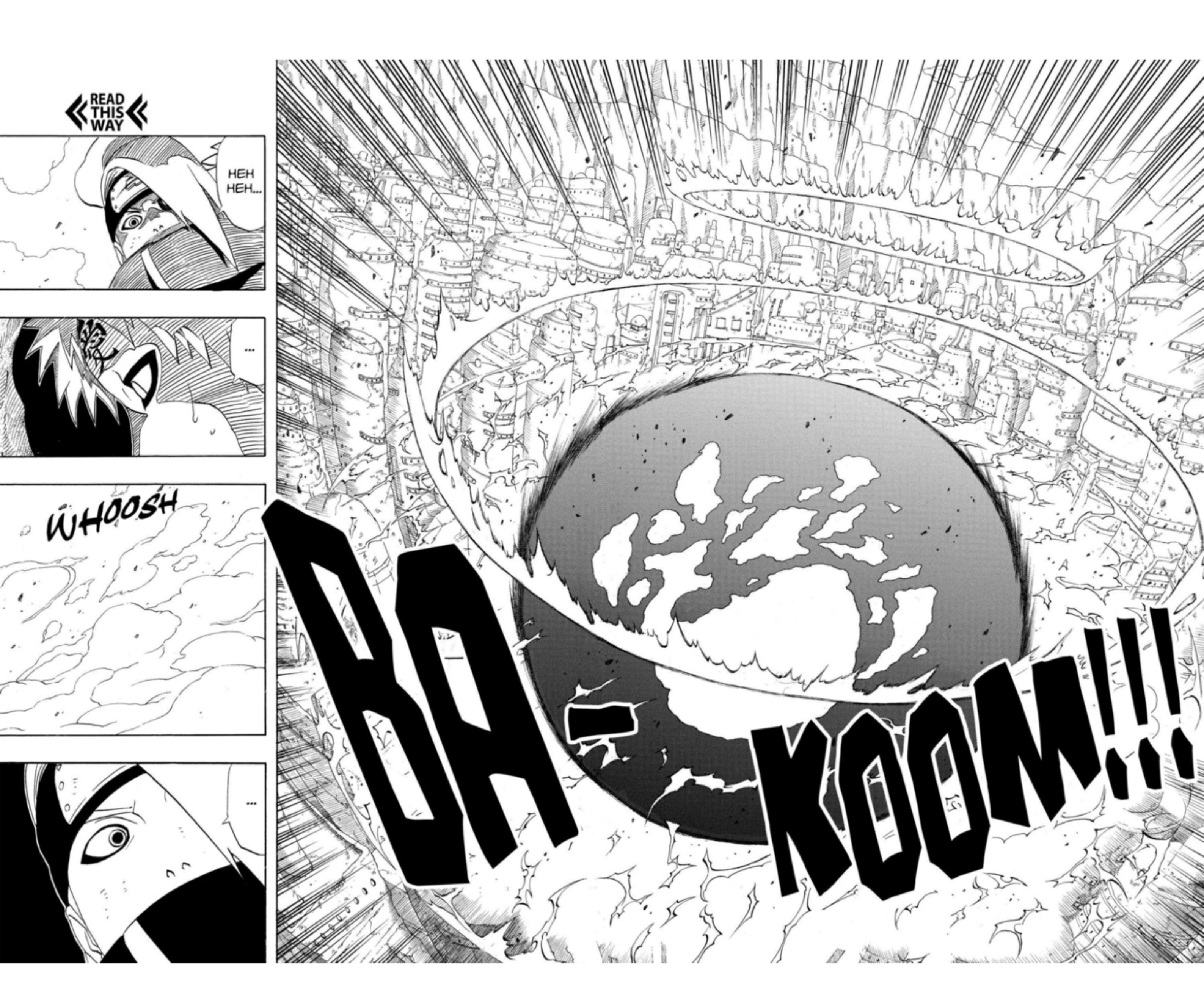






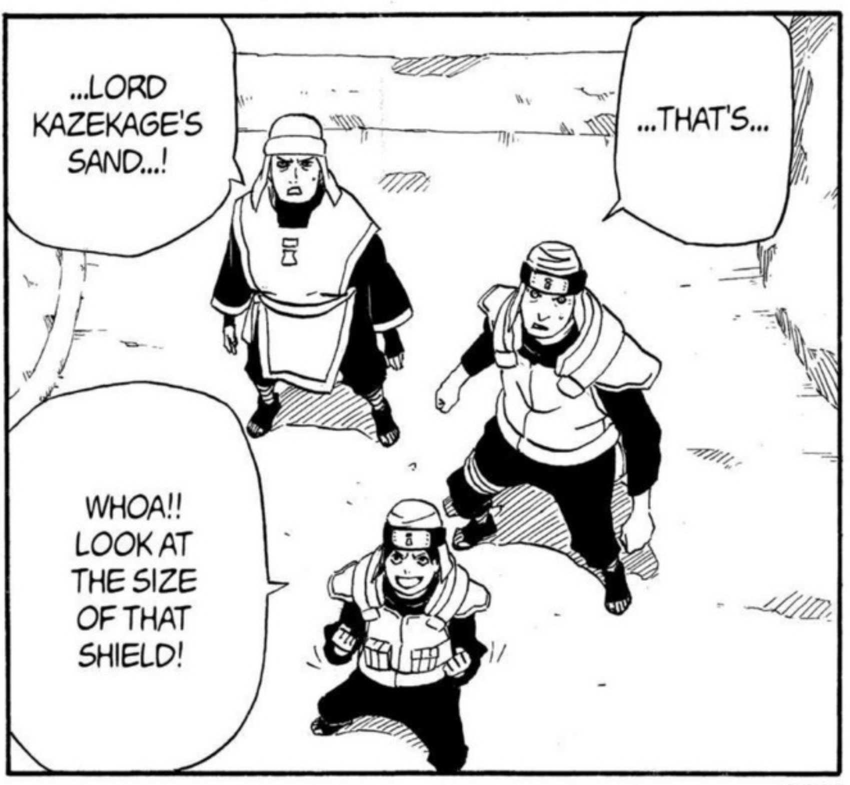





READ THIS WAY
BA-KOOM!!!
HEH HEH...
...
WHOOSH
...

BILLOW...

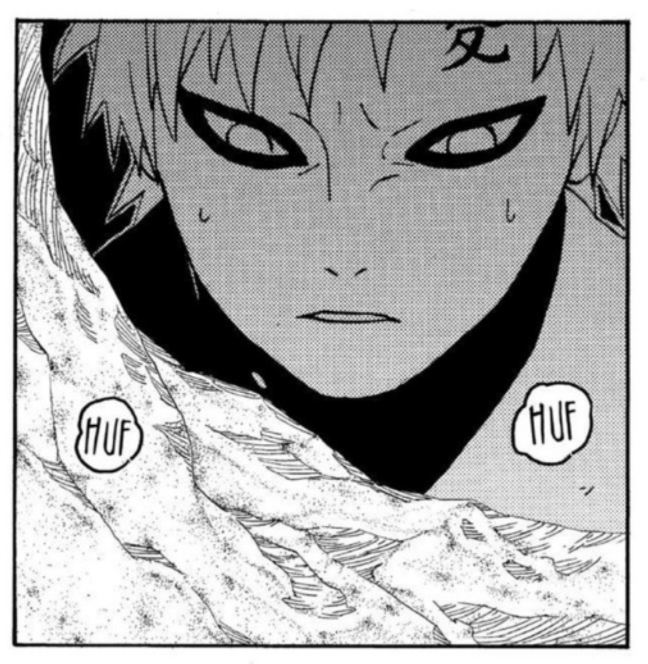
BILLOW...



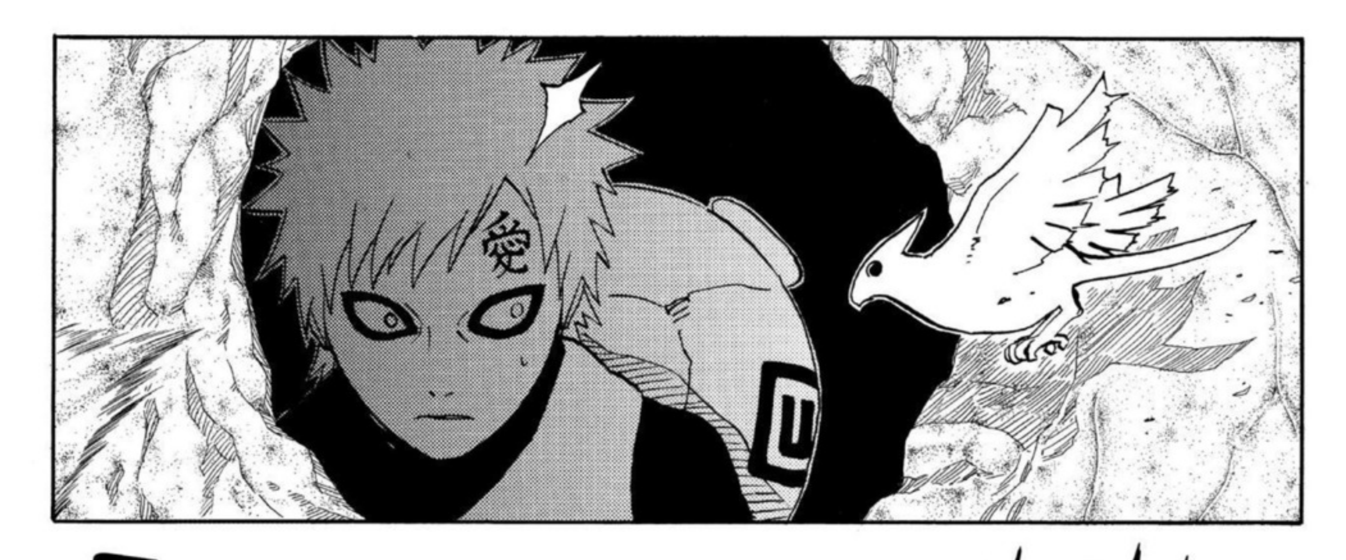




READ THIS WAY

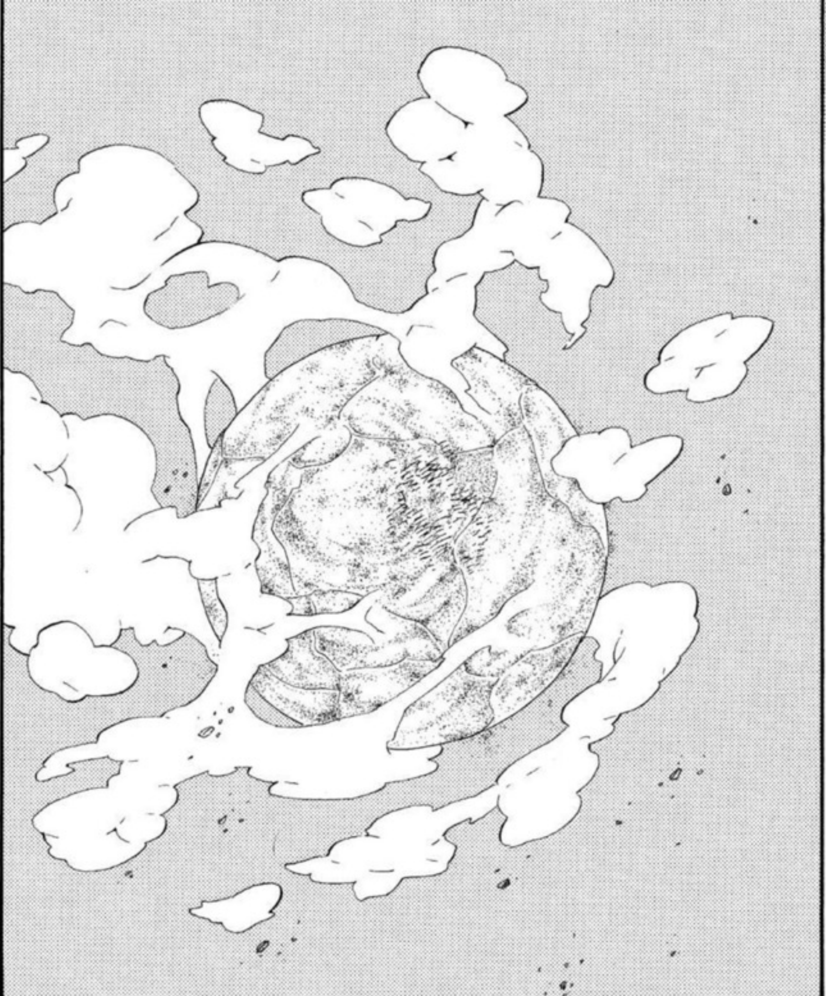

HUF
HUF

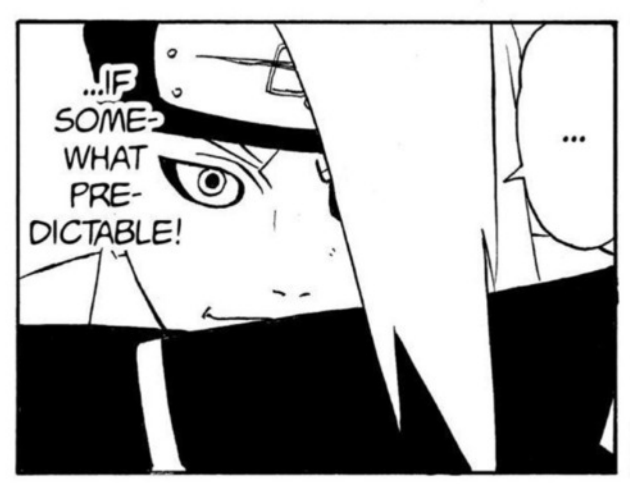

NOW YOU'RE IN RANGE, HMMM!
GRRR




YEEAAGH
KA-BOOM!


SWIFT AND RESILIENT...
FLAP FLAP




...IF SOME-WHAT PRE-DICTABLE!
...

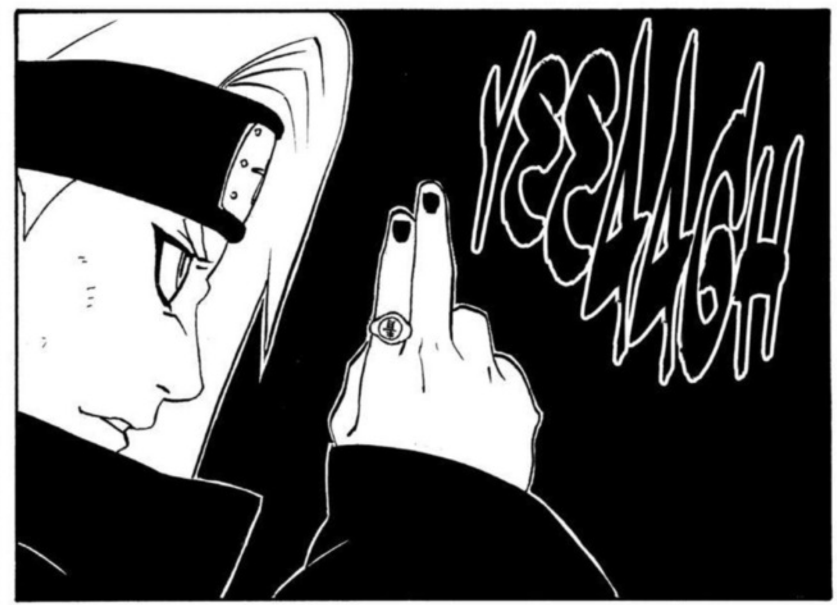

HUF
HUF






READ THIS WAY


!!

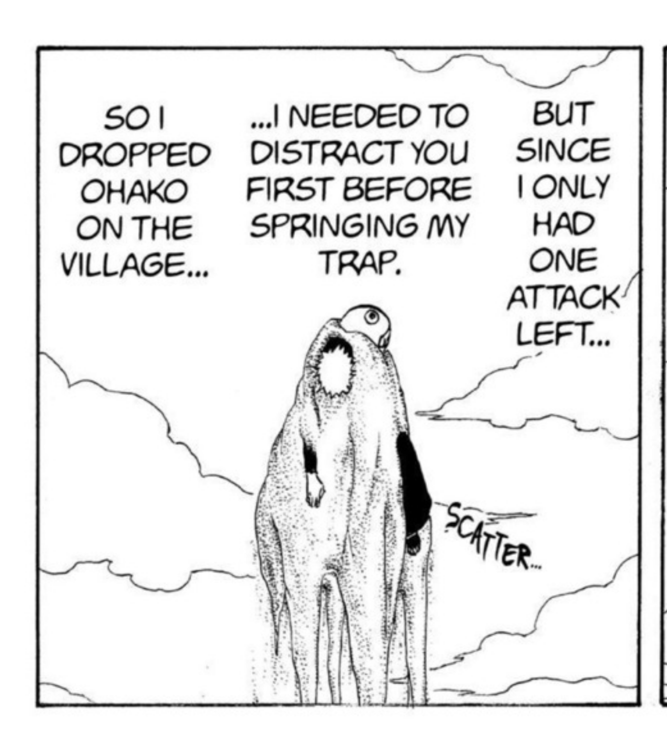

YEEAAGH


NO...


SHUDDER


HEH HEH...YOUR SAND MAY HAVE CRUSHED MY LEFT ARM, BUT NOT BEFORE I WAS ABLE TO CHEW SOME OF IT AND INFUSE THE GRAINS WITH DETONATING CLAY.
CRUSH...!!
THAT'S HOW I WAS ABLE TO PUT YOUR GREAT DEFENSE TO USE...


...AS PART OF MY OFFENSIVE...
I KNEW A CLOSE-RANGE EXPLOSION WOULD TRIGGER YOUR PERSONAL SAND SHIELD...
SCATTER...


BUT SINCE I ONLY HAD ONE ATTACK LEFT...
...I NEEDED TO DISTRACT YOU FIRST BEFORE SPRINGING MY TRAP.
SO I DROPPED OHAKO ON THE VILLAGE...
SCATTER...

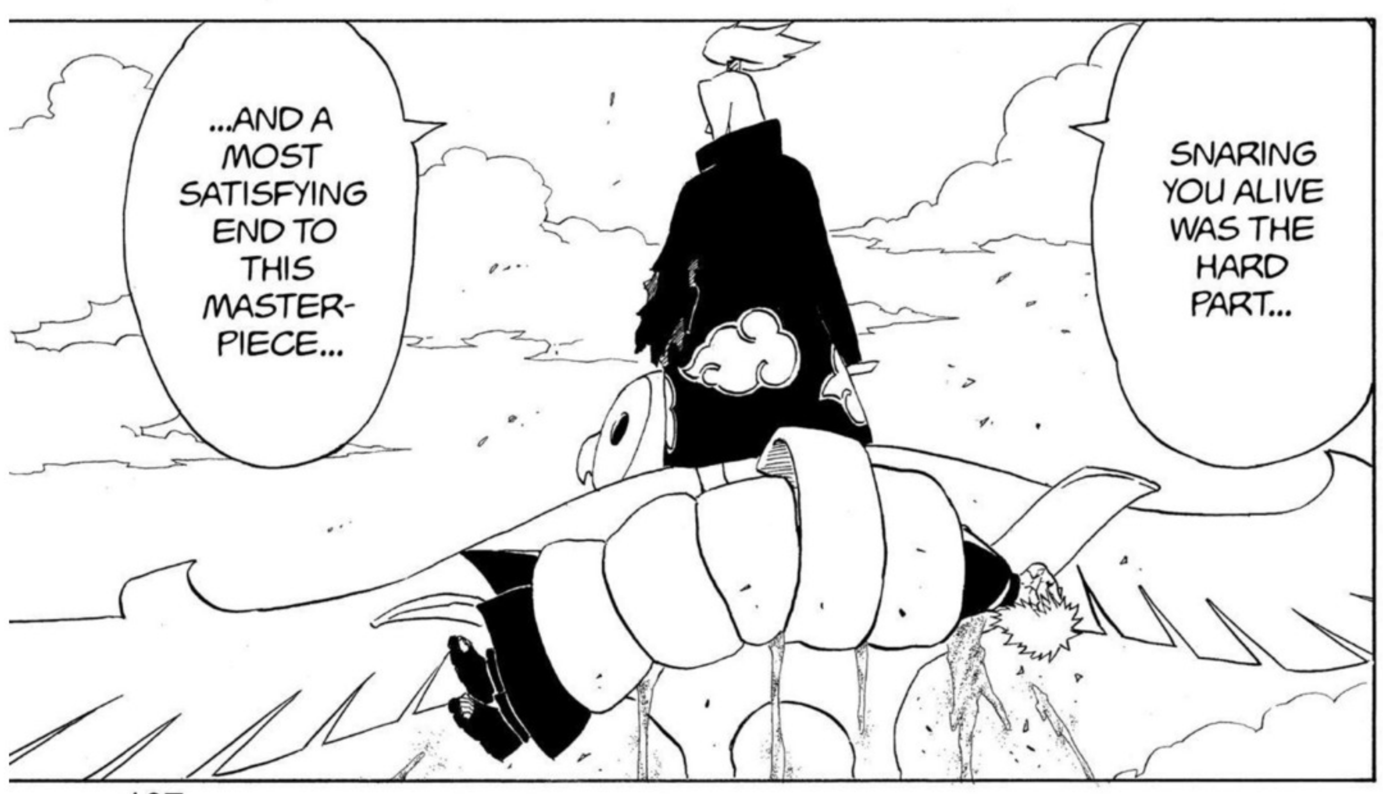

HO HO... LEAVE IT TO YOU, KAZEKAGE... USING THE LAST OF YOUR STRENGTH TO RETURN THE SAND OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE...
SLITHER...
...WHEN IT'D BE SO MUCH EASIER JUST TO DUMP IT ON 'EM.


READ THIS WAY

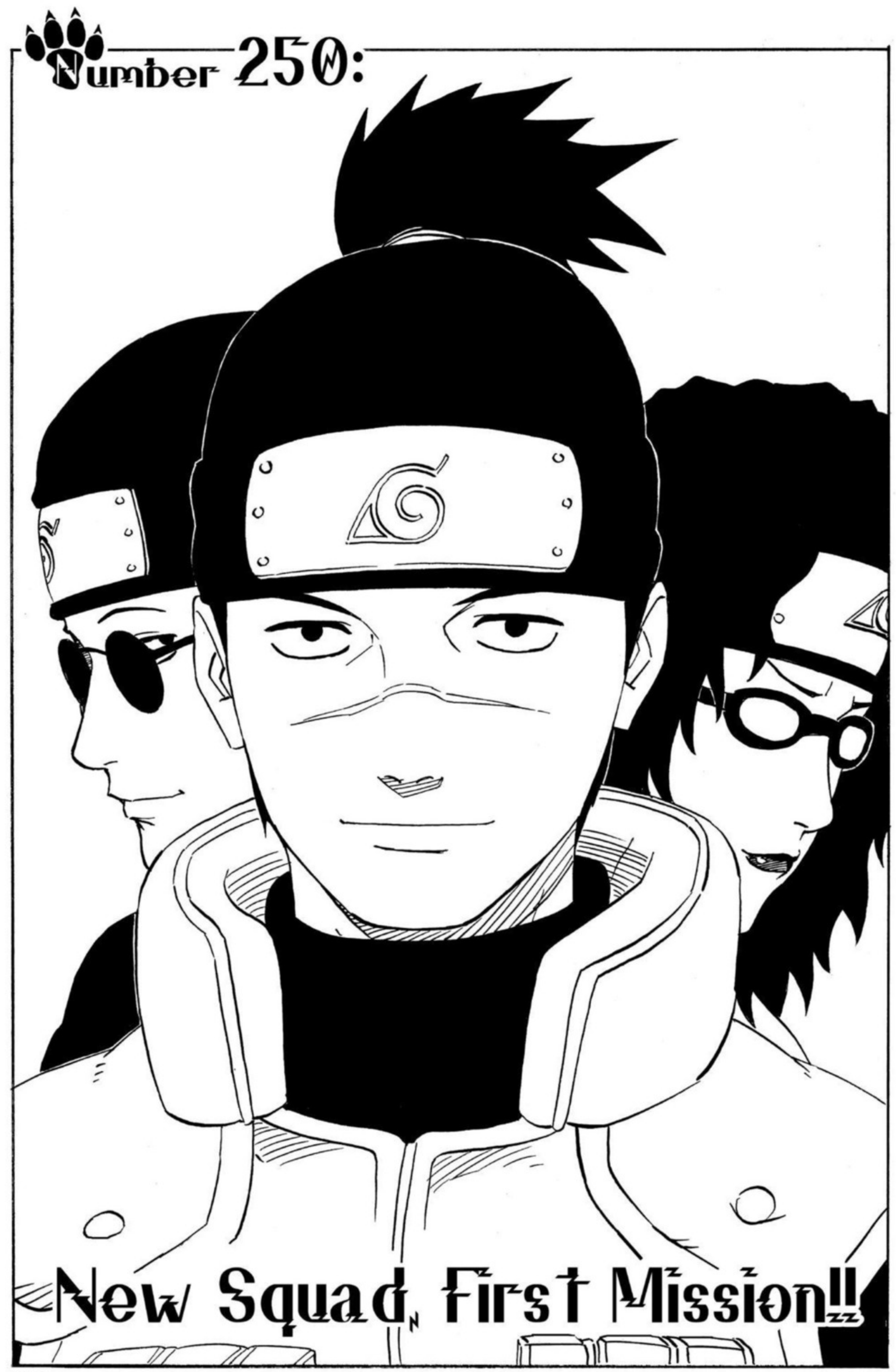

G... GAARA ?!

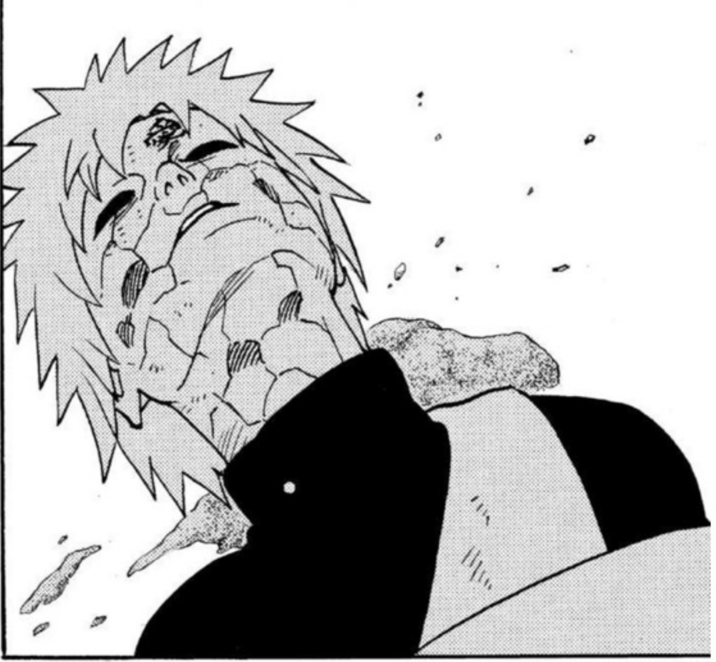

...

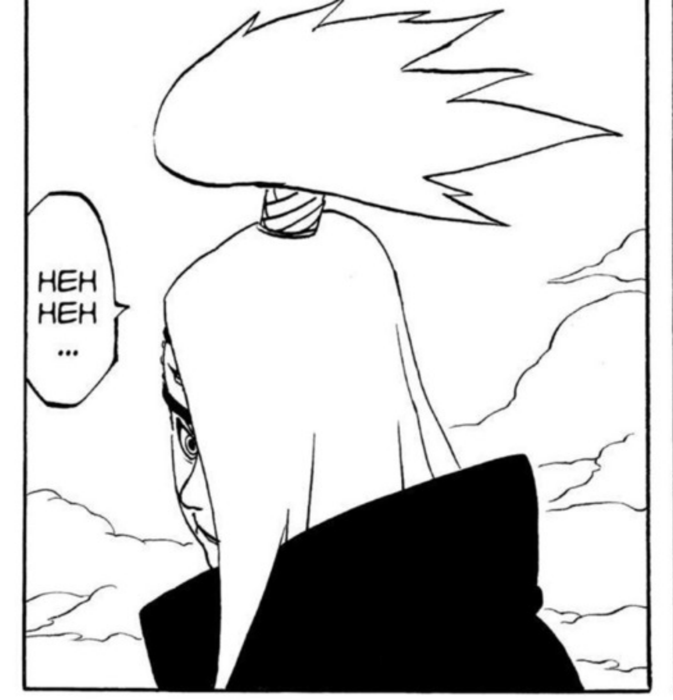

SHOOM


SNARING YOU ALIVE WAS THE HARD PART...
...AND A MOST SATISFYING END TO THIS MASTER-PIECE...


NARUTO


Number 250:
New Squad, First Mission!!




HEH HEH ...


WHISK...

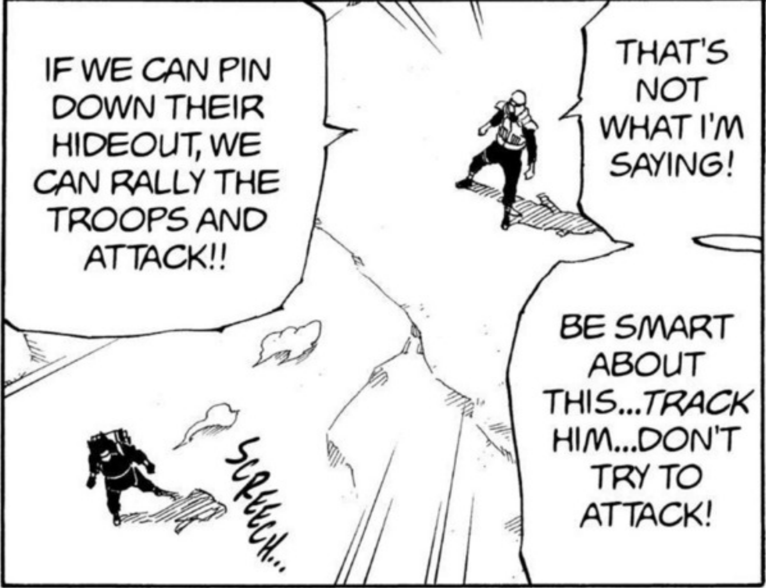

GNASH.
HE'S TAKING HIM ALIVE?!


HE WAS AFTER GAARA ALL ALONG! GAH!!
ZOOM
!


READ
THIS
WAY


KANKURO! WAIT!
HE'S POWERFUL ENOUGH TO TAKE DOWN GAARA!
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'LL ACCOM-PLISH?!!

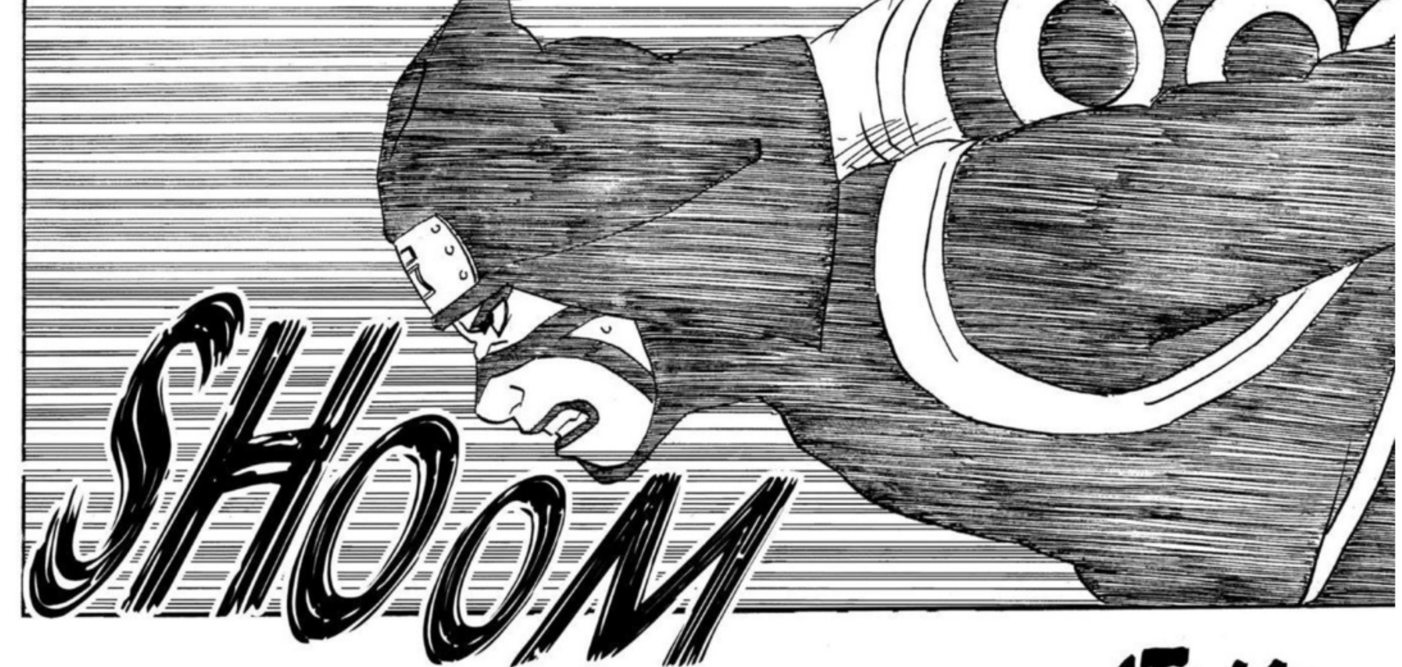

!
I CAN'T JUST STAND AROUND AND DO NOTHING!!


THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M SAYING!
BE SMART ABOUT THIS...TRACK HIM...DON'T TRY TO ATTACK!
IF WE CAN PIN DOWN THEIR HIDEOUT, WE CAN RALLY THE TROOPS AND ATTACK!!
SCREECH...

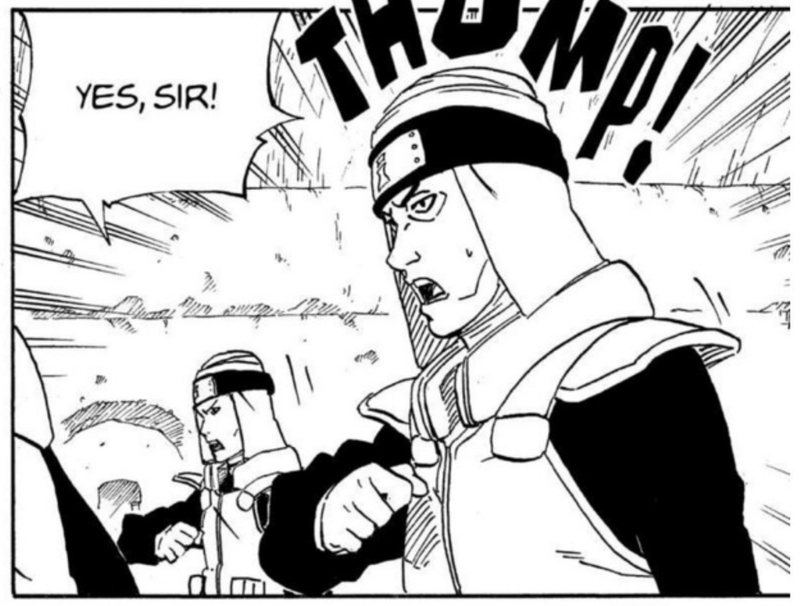

ALL RIGHT ...!
I'LL TRY!!
WHIRL


TSK...
KAN-KURO .....!!!


ZOOM
...GAH...!

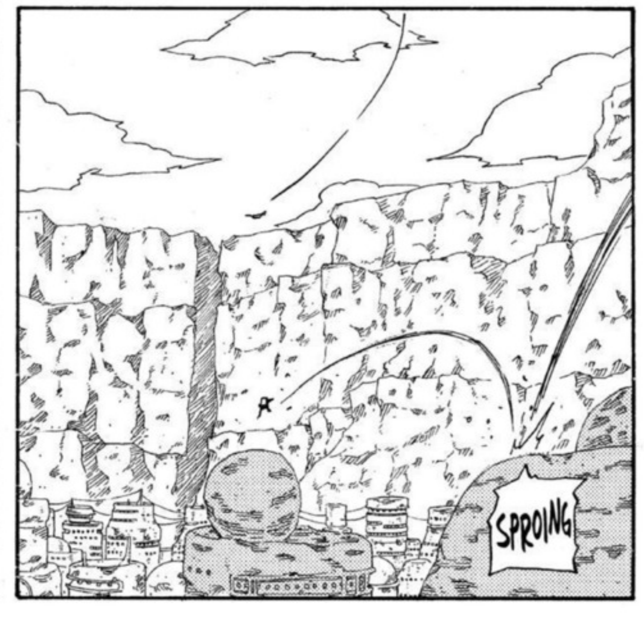

SHOOM


STOMP
STOMP
DEPLOY A TRACKING UNIT AND HAVE THEM TAIL KANKURO!
AND RELAY OUR SITUATION TO KONOHA **NOW!**
TELL THEM THIS IS AN EMERGENCY!


THUMP!
YES, SIR!

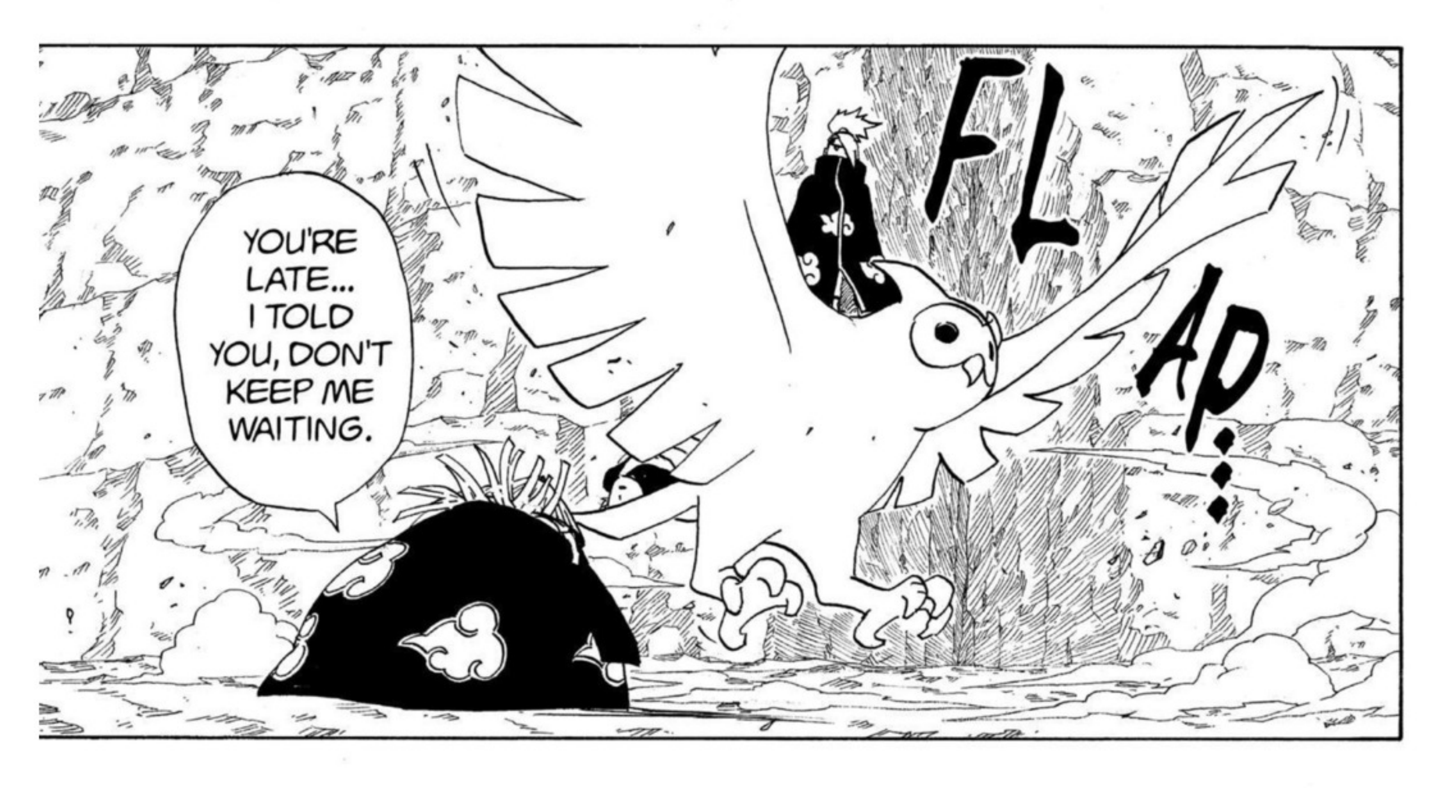

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS...
SOMETHING'S ABOUT TO HAPPEN...


READ THIS WAY


SPROING


SKIM...

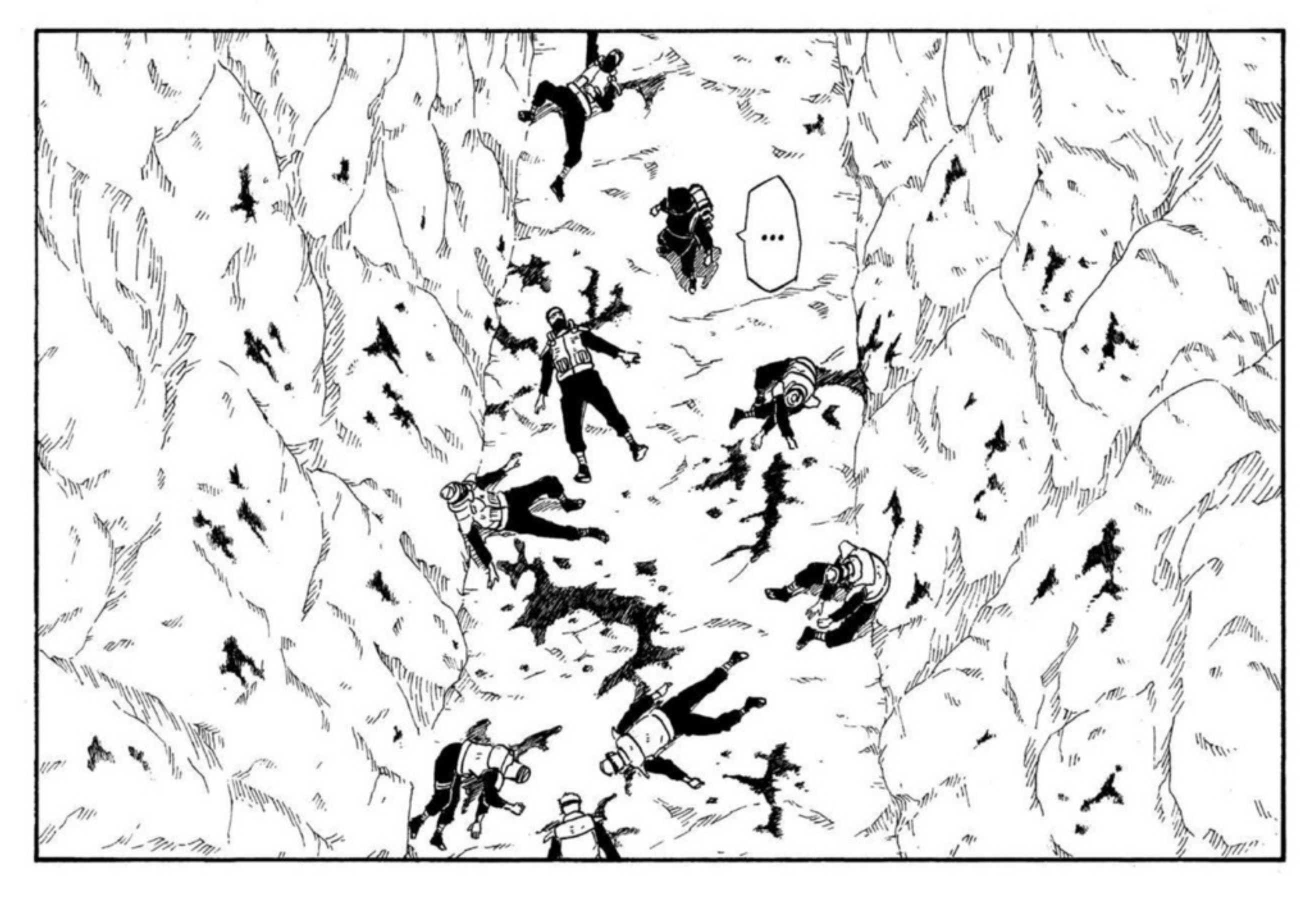

HE'S LANDING ...?!


FLAP...
YOU'RE LATE... I TOLD YOU, DON'T KEEP ME WAITING.


YOU WERE RIGHT. HE **WAS** RATHER STRONG. *HMMM?*


PERHAPS NEXT TIME YOU'LL LISTEN TO ME...


...WH...
WHAT...?!
NO...
THIS CAN'T
BE...

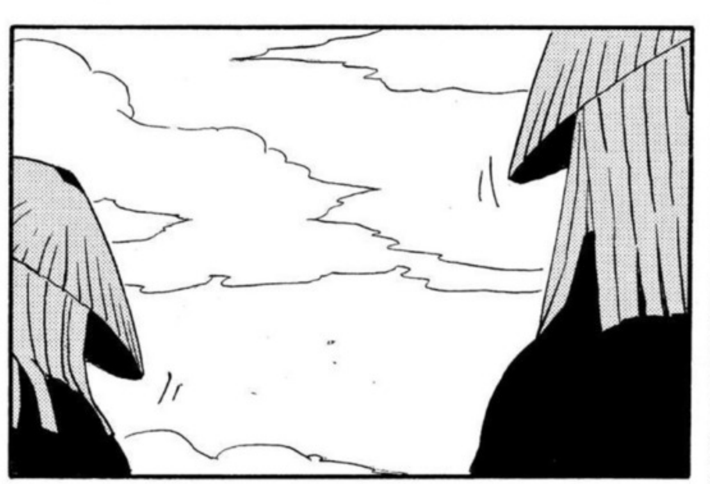

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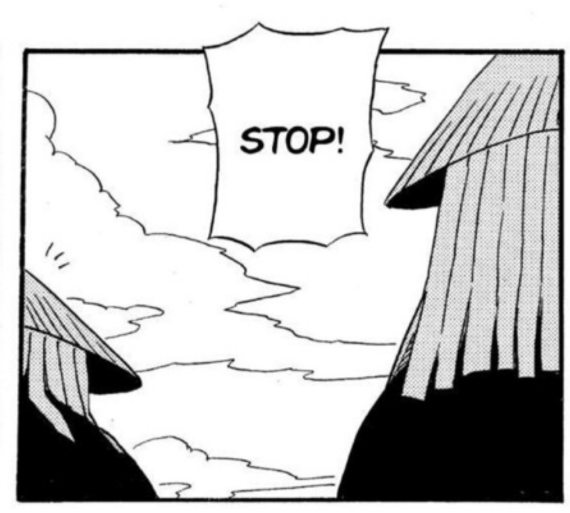

SHOOF

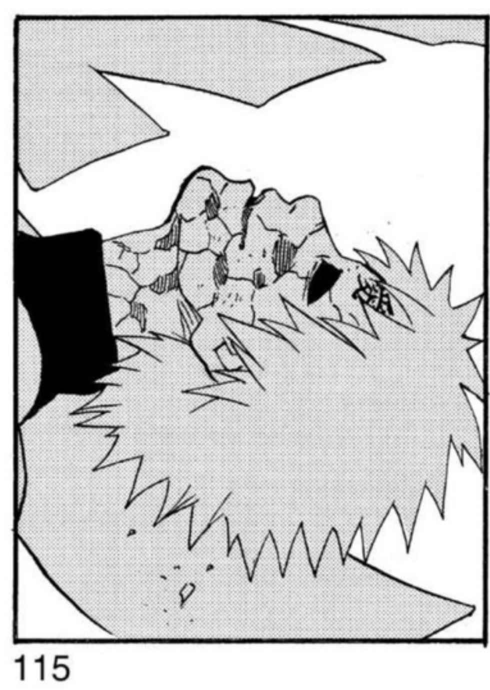

GRRR

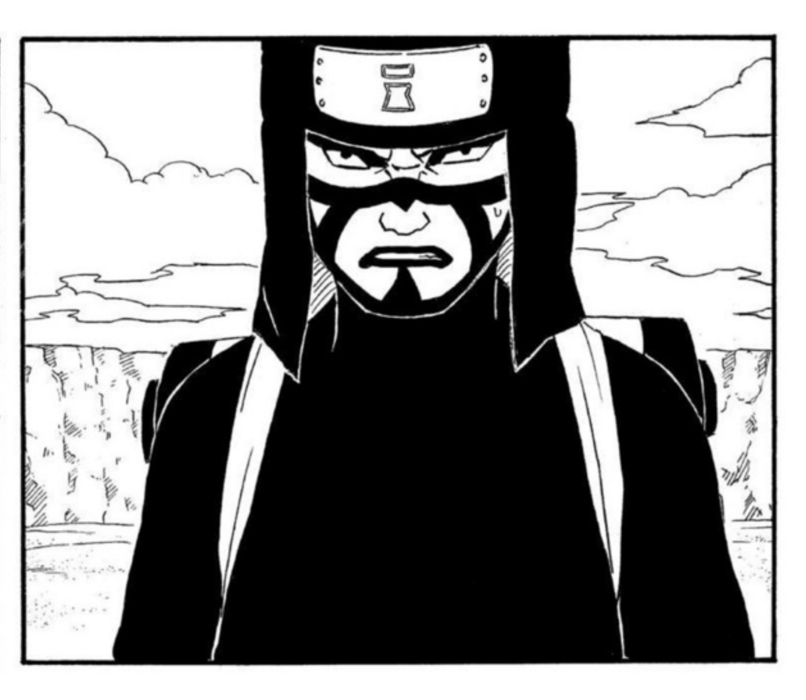
DREDGE-DREDGE

FLOP FLOP



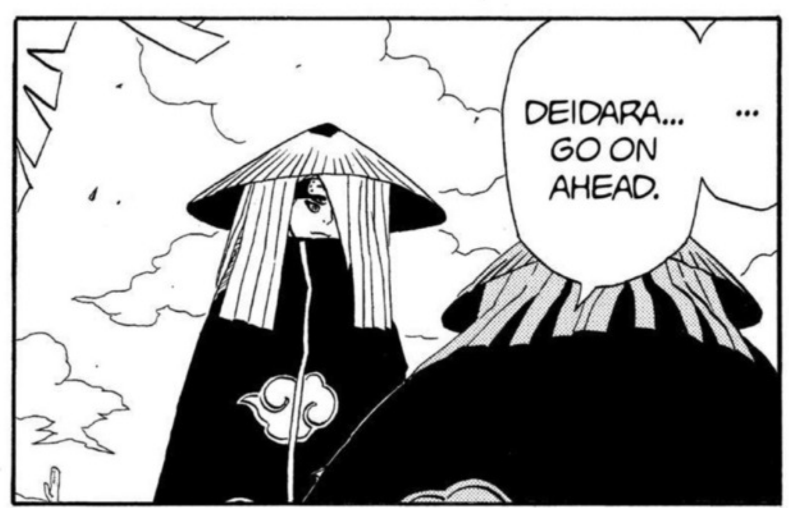




I'M TAKING GAARA BACK!












SLAP

烏

山椒魚

黒蟻

(Scroll: Crow)

(Scroll: Salamander)

(Scroll: Ant)

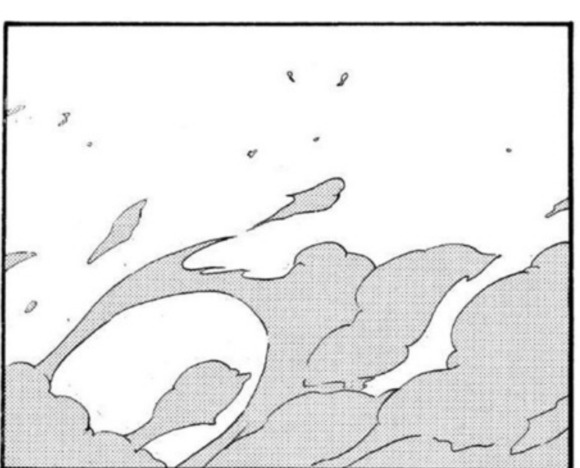
BOOF

CLAP










CLAKETA-
CLIKETA-
CLACK


PUPPET ARTS, HUH...


HEH... ENJOY THE SHOW...
TAP


YOU'RE NOT GOING ANY-WHERE!
LASH


WOOSH


CRACK


!


I DON'T LIKE TO WAIT *OR* KEEP OTHERS WAITING, SO...
...I'LL MAKE THIS SHORT AND SWEET.


READ THIS WAY


こってり

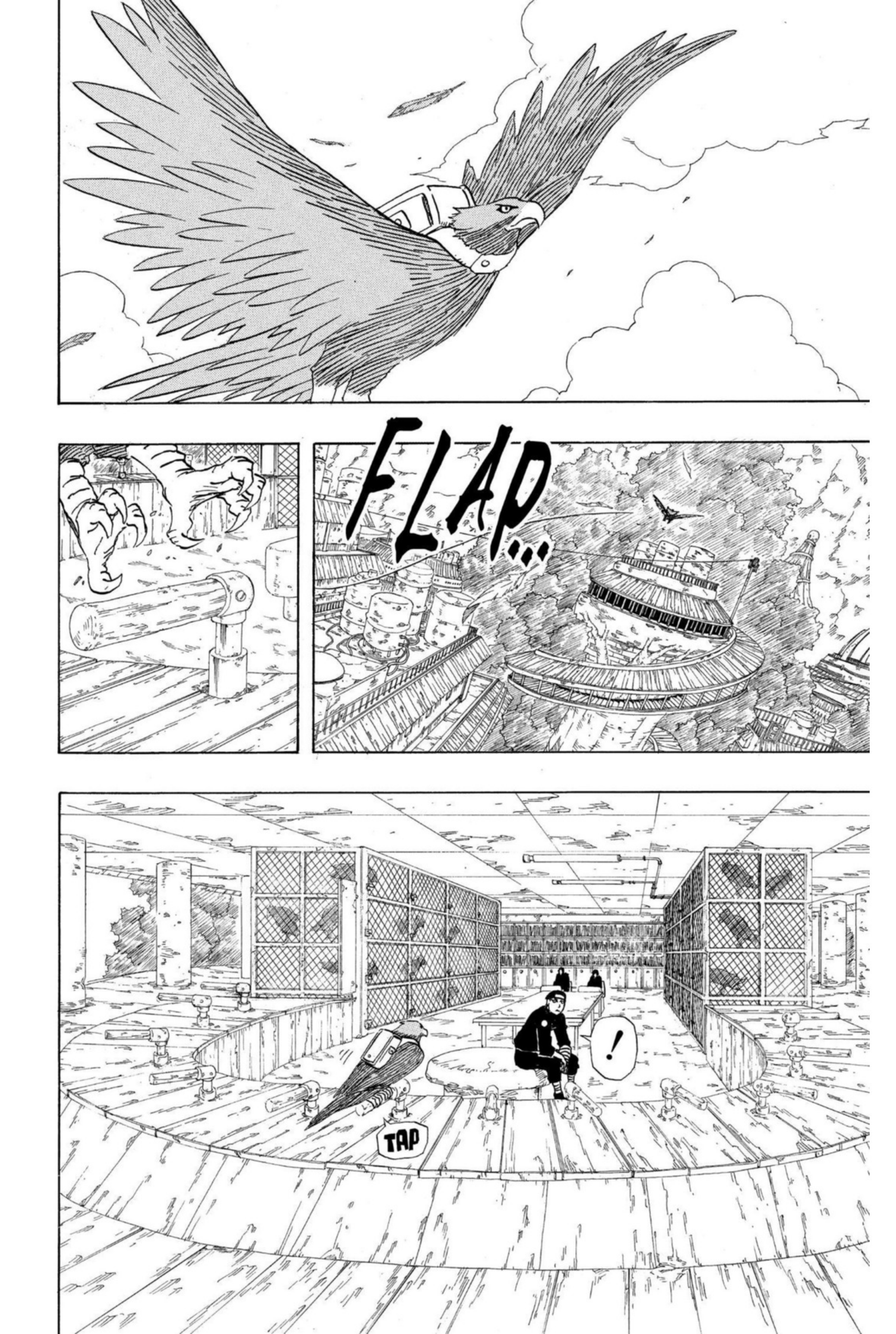

YOU'RE LATE!
SORRY, I WAS PROCRAS-TINATING ON THE NEW TEAM'S PAPER-WORK...


TODAY IS THE FIRST DAY OF OUR MISSION AS A NEW TEAM, YOU KNOW!
AND YOU'RE NOT EXCITED ?!!
MASTER KAKASHI! YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL!!


OH, LIKE YOU'RE ONE TO TALK, NARUTO!
SO WHAT IF HE'S A LITTLE LACKADAISI-CAL? THAT'S JUST WHO HE IS.


...
NOT SURE THAT WAS A COMPLI-MENT...


!

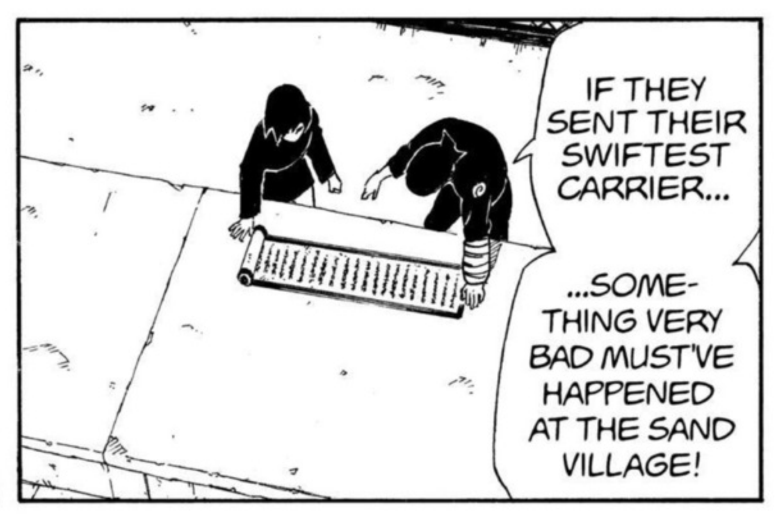

FLAP...
!
TAP


READ
THIS
WAY

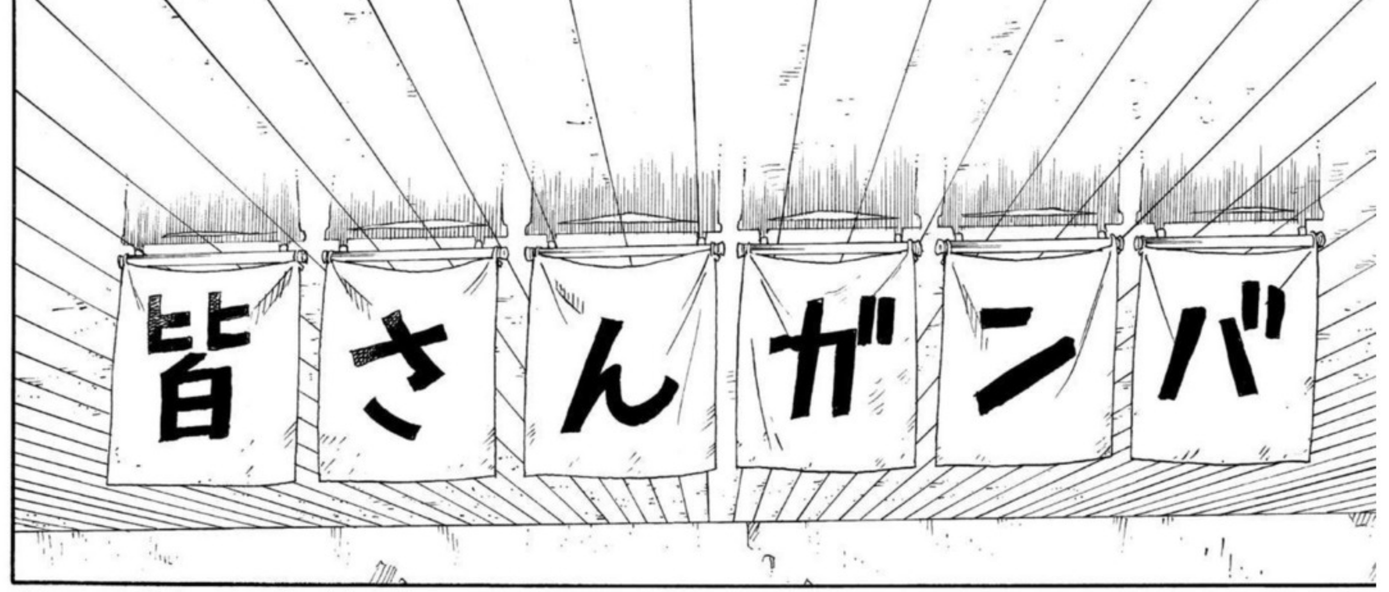

CLAMP
!!
THAT'S SUNAGAKURE'S HAWK, TAKAMARU!


TUMP
伝
CALL UP THE DECODERS NOW!


FSSSH


IF THEY SENT THEIR SWIFTEST CARRIER...
...SOME-THING VERY BAD MUST'VE HAPPENED AT THE SAND VILLAGE!


WHAT-EVER IT WAS...
...WE'LL KNOW SOON ENOUGH!



(Banner: Everyone, Good Luck)







(Ceiling: Shinobi)





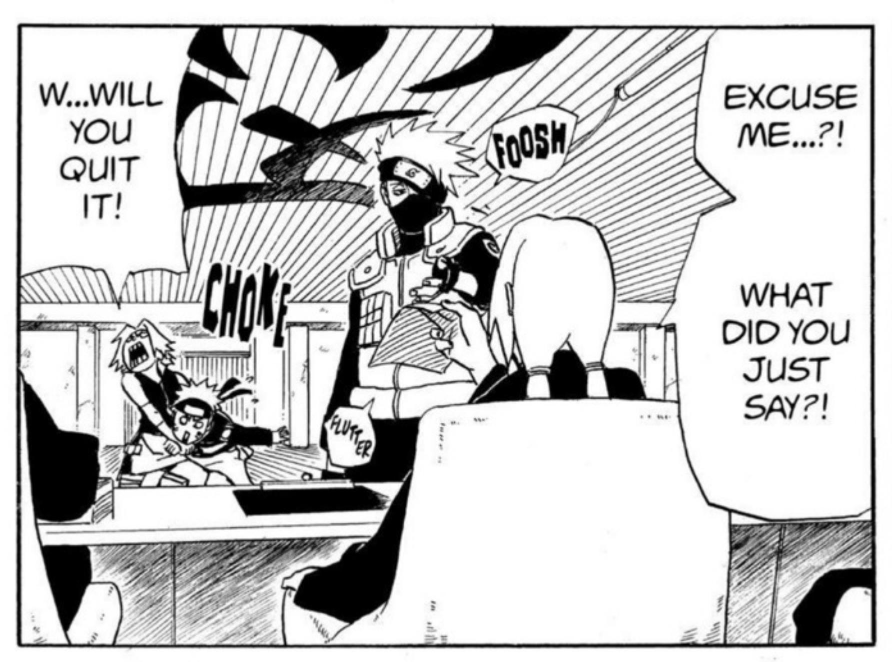


READ
THIS
WAY


SIGH...
NARUTO... MENTALLY, YOU HAVEN'T MATURED AT ALL...


S...SO SORRY, MILADY!
I'LL SPEAK TO HIM LATER!
I...IDIOT! YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW FEROCIOUS LADY TSUNADE CAN BE...!!
INNER SAKURA
STRANGLE


OLD MAN THIRD...HE REALLY KNEW HIS STUFF.

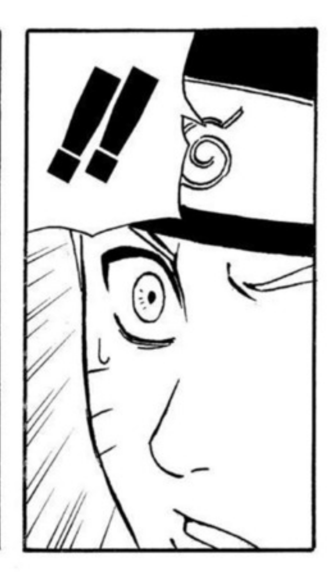

EXCUSE ME...?!
WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?!
FOOSH
W...WILL YOU QUIT IT!
CHOKE
FLUTTER


LADY FIFTH!!
T... TERRIBLE NEWS!
SLAM


NOW WHAT?
HUF
HUF

WE'VE JUST RECEIVED WORD THAT SAND'S KAZEKAGE...

...HAS BEEN KIDNAPPED BY A MEMBER OF THE AKATSUKI!



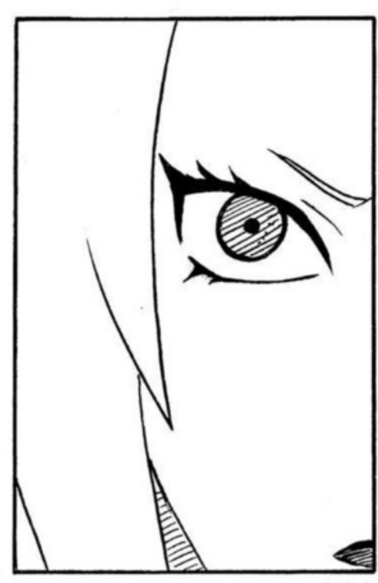





























YOU WILL LEAVE FOR THE SAND NOW! ASSESS THE SITUATION AND REPORT BACK **IMMEDIATELY**!

AFTERWARD, YOU WILL FOLLOW SAND'S ORDERS AND PROVIDE THEM WHATEVER ASSISTANCE THEY REQUIRE!

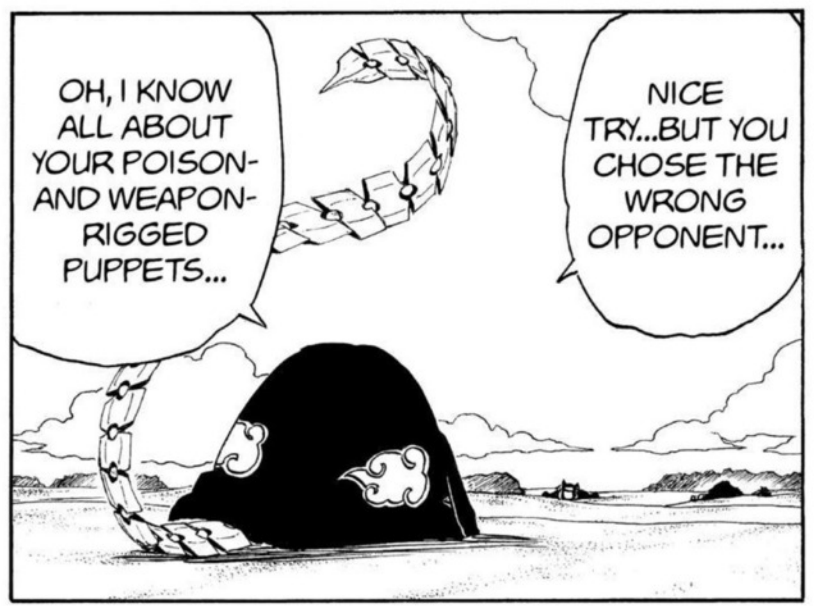

NARUTO

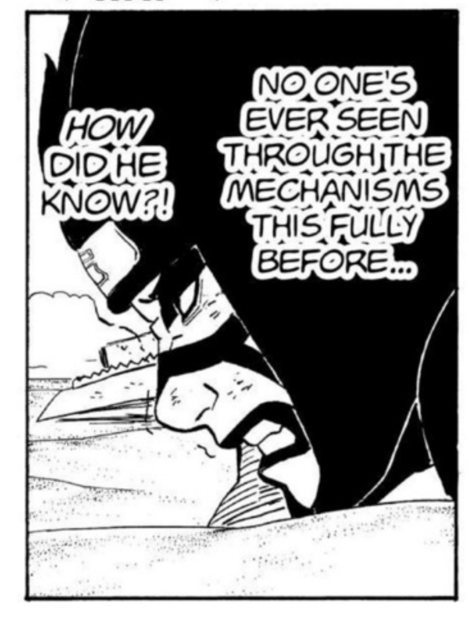
# Number 251: To the Sand...!!

FWOOOOOOH


GRR... UGH...
TWITCH
BODY'S STARTING TO TINGLE... DON'T TELL ME...
TWITCH
HE USES POISON, TOO...


READ THIS WAY


NICE TRY...BUT YOU CHOSE THE WRONG OPPONENT...
OH, I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOUR POISON- AND WEAPON-RIGGED PUPPETS...


NO ONE'S EVER SEEN THROUGH THE MECHANISMS THIS FULLY BEFORE...
HOW DID HE KNOW?!


HEH HEH...
BY THE LOOK ON YOUR FACE, I CAN TELL WHAT YOU'RE THINKING... HOW DID HE KNOW...?!
ELEMENTARY, BOY...YOU SEE, THE PUPPET MASTER WHO CREATED THE CROW, THE ANT, THE SALAMANDER...


...IS NONE OTHER THAN I, THE ONE PULLING THEIR STRINGS!

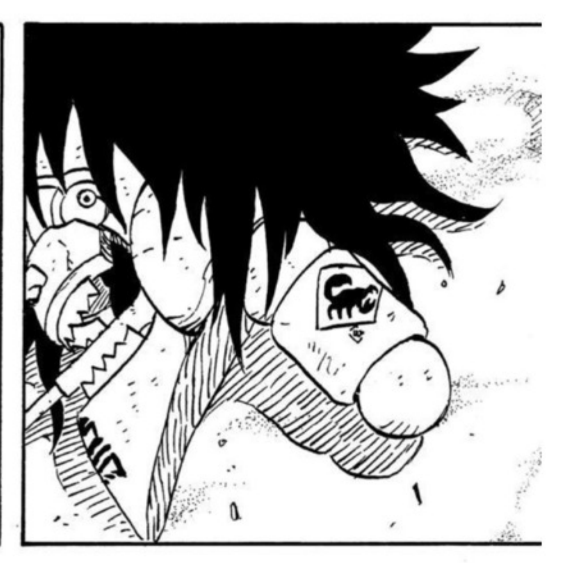

?!

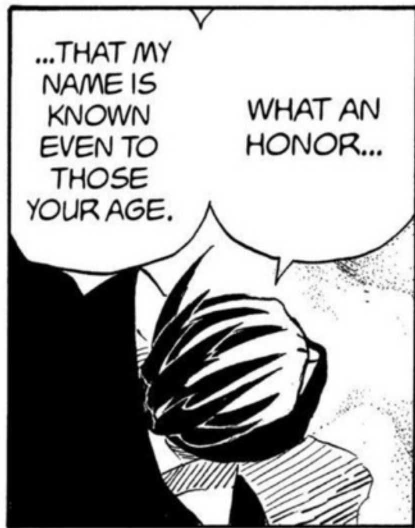


I MUST SAY, THOUGH... THIS WAS A RATHER ENTERTAINING DIVERSION...
...FIGHTING A JUNIOR VERSION OF MYSELF WITH MY OWN HAND-ME-DOWNS.




...YOU... YOU'RE THE ONE...
...YOU BUILT THE PUPPET CORPS...
...SASORI OF THE RED SAND?!



WHAT AN HONOR...
...THAT MY NAME IS KNOWN EVEN TO THOSE YOUR AGE.



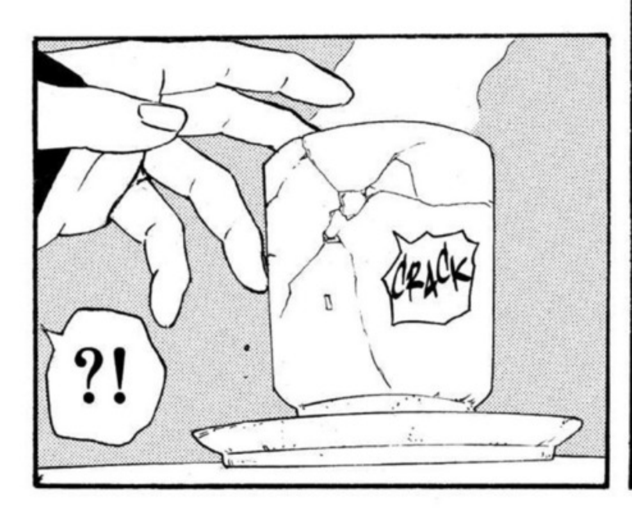

YOU DESERTED THE SAND 20 YEARS AGO...
...SO WHY RETURN NOW?!




WHAT'S THE POINT OF ASKING, WHEN YOU'RE ABOUT TO DIE?
FSSH


CHIRP
CHIRP
だんご

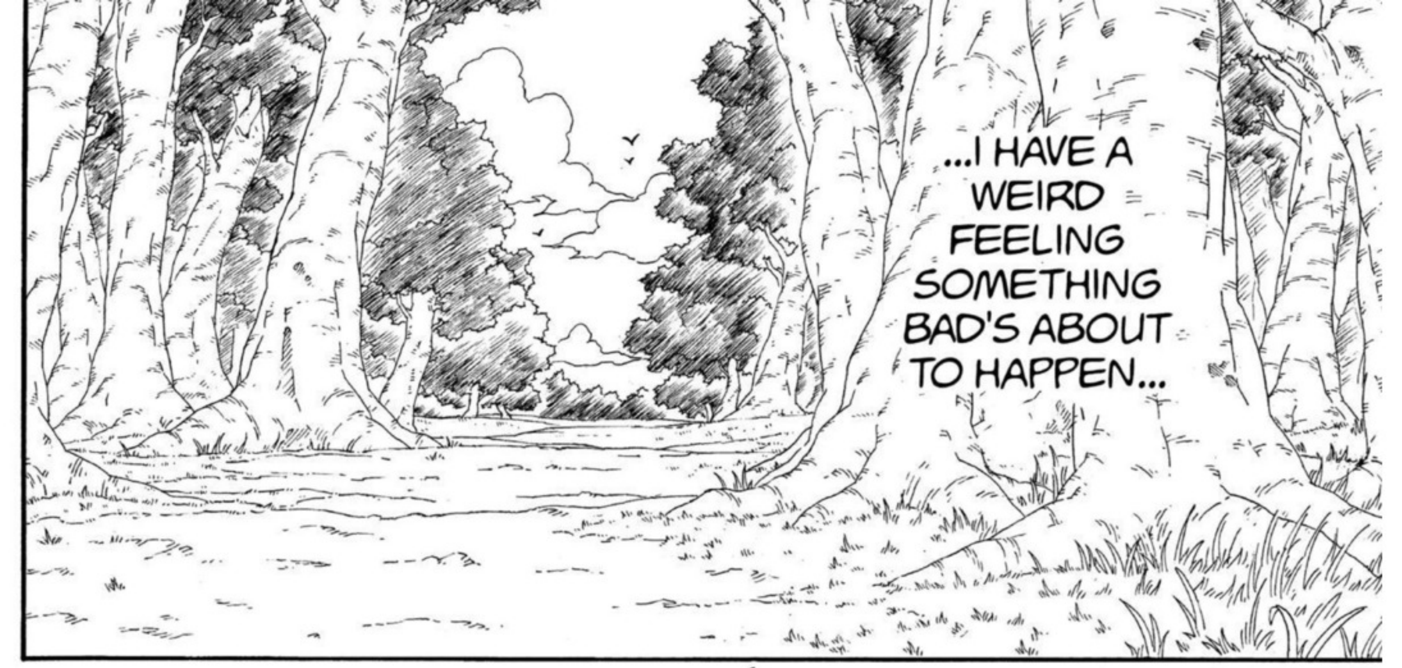

REACH

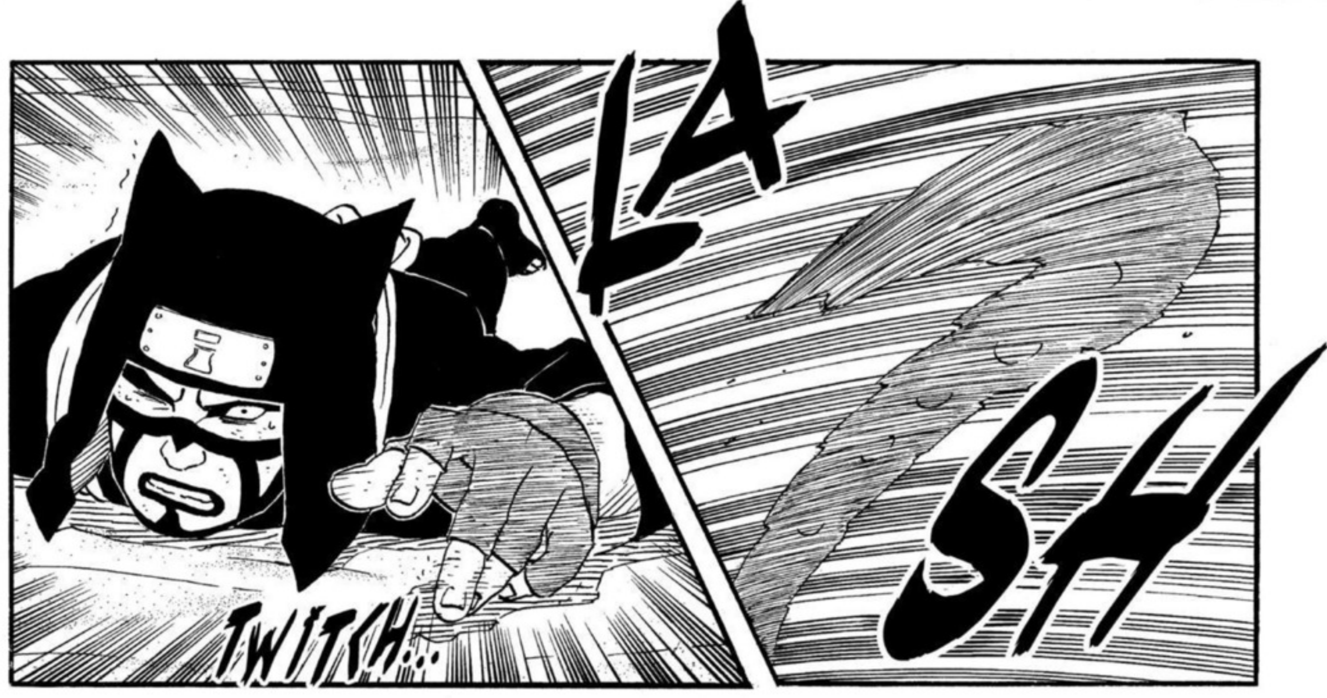

CRACK
?!




...I AM NOT SUPER-STITIOUS, BUT...


...

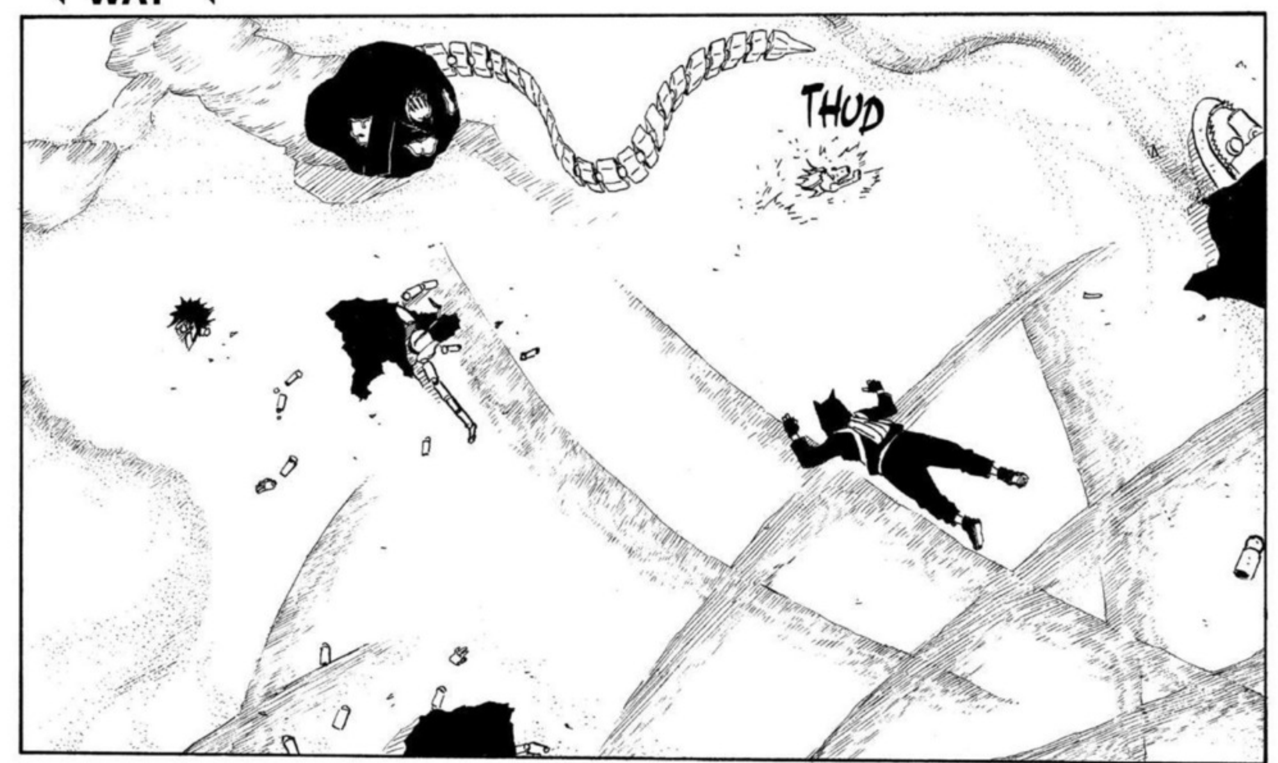

...I HAVE A WEIRD FEELING SOMETHING BAD'S ABOUT TO HAPPEN...


TWITCH...
LASH

!

BAN




KASHINK

SLASH

RIP

JERK

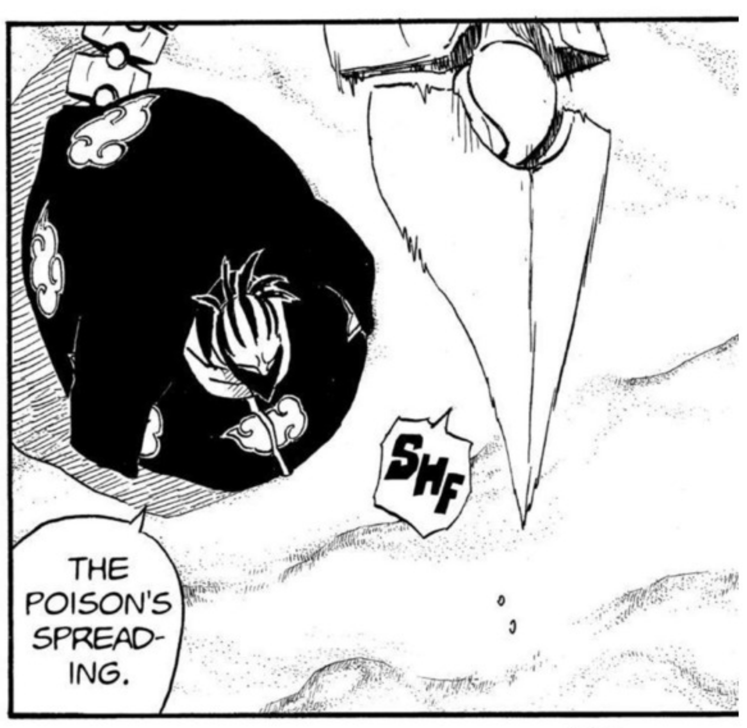
ALMOST.

UGH...

TAP

TWITCH
SHF
SLAM

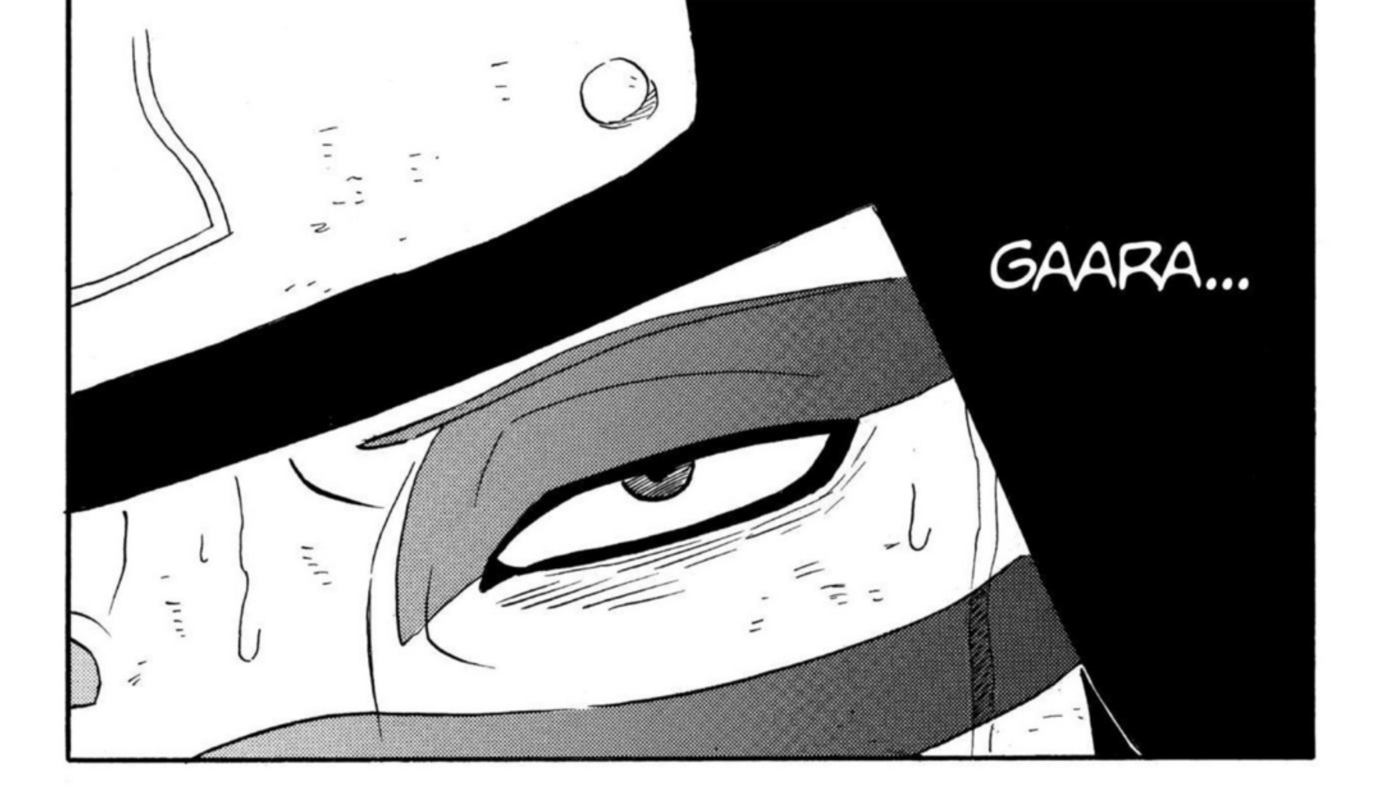


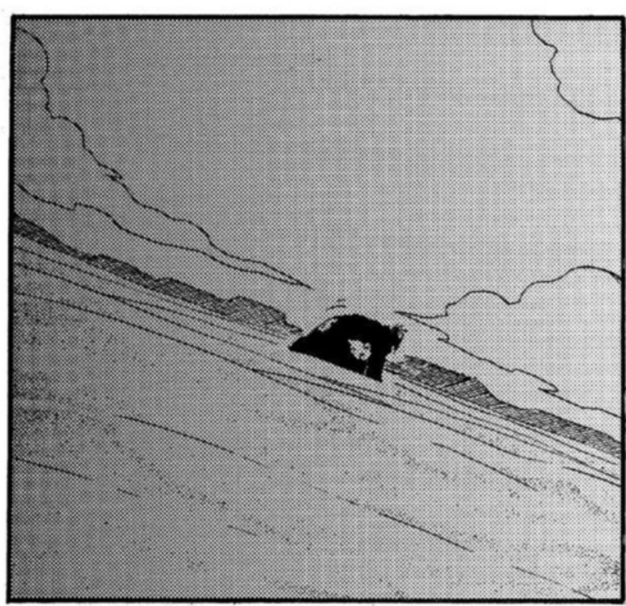



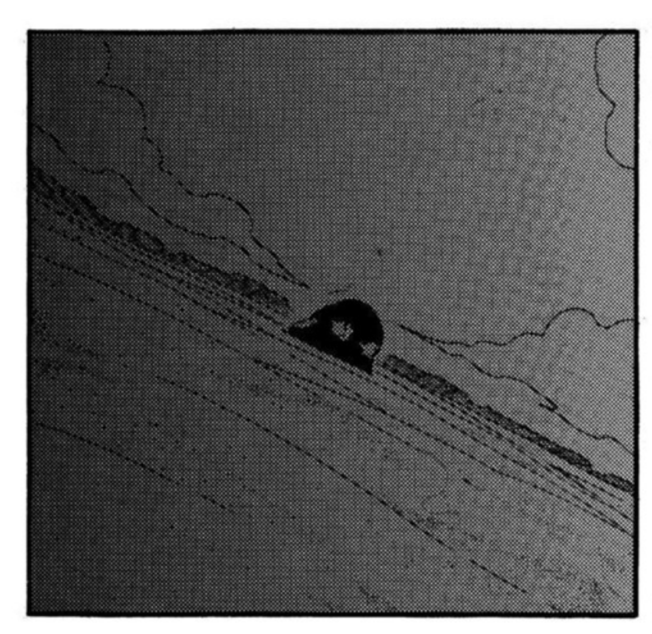
SHF
THE POISON'S SPREAD-ING.




IT'S POINTLESS TO STRUGGLE.
YOU HAVE TWO, MAYBE THREE DAYS. I DON'T HAVE TO FINISH YOU NOW.
WE BOTH KNOW HOW THIS IS GOING TO END...
WHOOOOOOOSH





GAH...

THERE HE IS! OVER THERE!!

HE'S UNCONSCIOUS! AND HIS PUPPETS HAVE BEEN DESTROYED, TOO...!

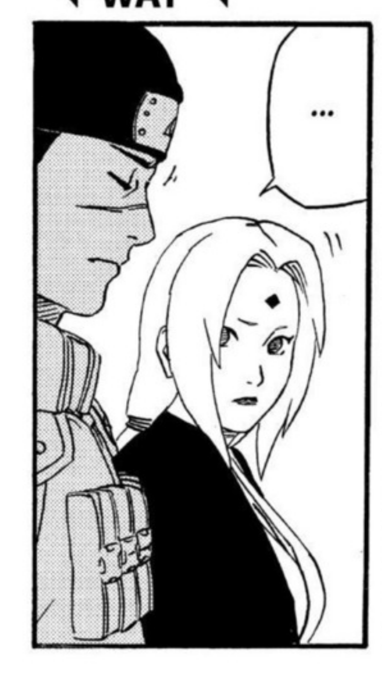

WELL, THEN!
WE'RE OFF!
WHOO
TUG
I'LL RETURN, LADY TSUNADE!!
OOSH

READ THIS WAY





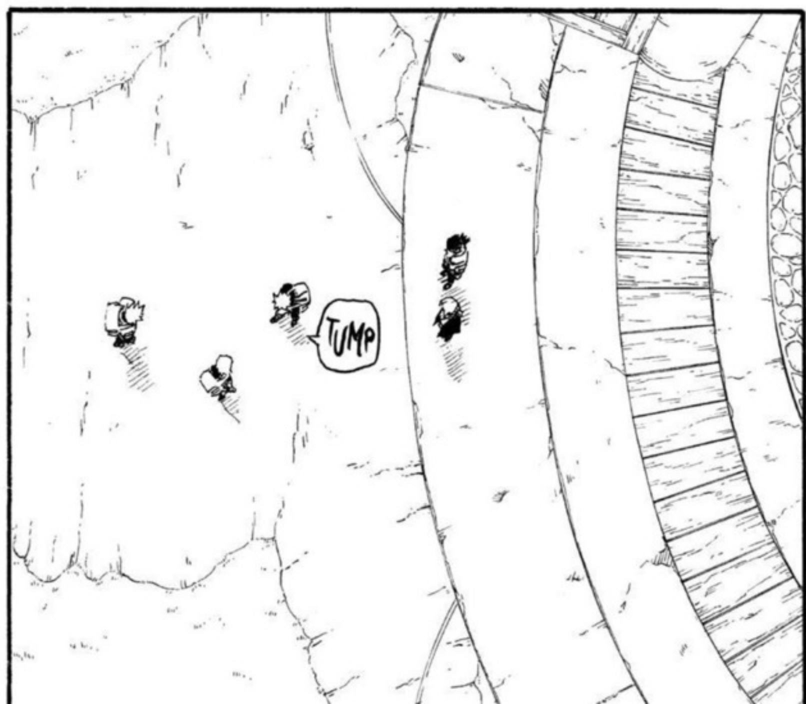










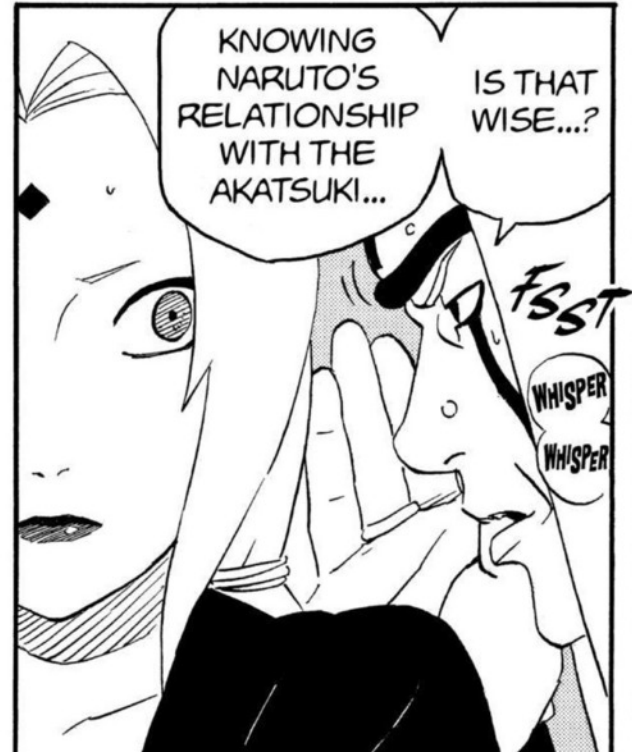




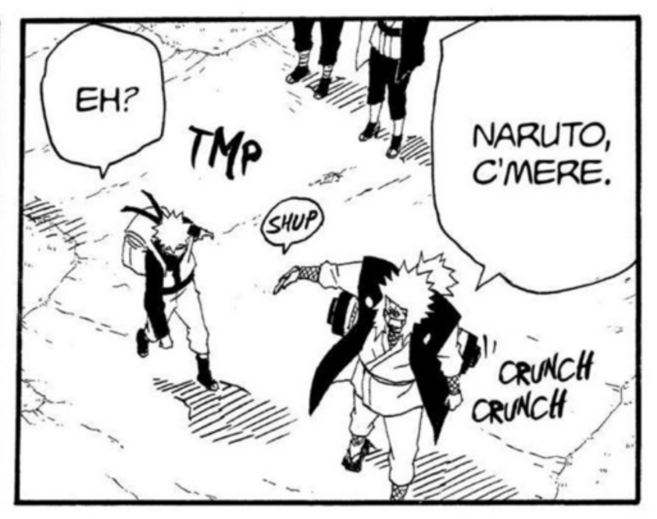
THUMP
HEY!
NARUTO, YA HEADING OUT ON A MISSION?

YUP!

STOMP!
OH, BUT BEFORE THAT...
BAD NEWS, TSUNADE.
THE KAZEKAGE'S BEEN...
I KNOW.

I'M ABOUT TO SEND THESE THREE TO THE SAND.
FWHP
FWHP
DOINK

IS THAT WISE...?
KNOWING NARUTO'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE AKATSUKI...
FSST
WHISPER
WHISPER


READ THIS WAY


NARUTO, C'MERE.
SHUP
CRUNCH CRUNCH
TMP
EH?


DON'T PUSH IT IF IT COMES TO A FIGHT AGAINST THE AKATSUKI, YOU HEAR ME...?
...


HEY, THEY'RE THE ONES WHO'VE GOT BUSINESS WITH ME...
...SO I'M GONNA MEET THEM ON *MY* TERMS!


...


YOU *ARE* STRONGER THAN BEFORE, THAT'S TRUE...
...BUT IF YOU LOSE YOUR COOL, YOU'LL JUST DIG YOUR OWN GRAVE.
油
YOUR QUICK TEMPER'S STILL YOUR ACHILLES' HEEL.


...
GNASH


NARUTO, LOOK...
I THINK YOU KNOW THIS ALREADY, BUT...

...JUST DON'T USE *THAT* JUTSU...


I KNOW...


...


DON'T WORRY...


KAKASHI...KEEP AN EYE ON HIM. DON'T LET HIM GO TOO CRAZY.
I'M COUNTING ON YOU...!


STOMP
STOMP


READ THIS WAY


MASTER KAKASHI! SAKURA! LET'S GO ALREADY!!
H...HEY! WAIT UP!
KLIP KLIP

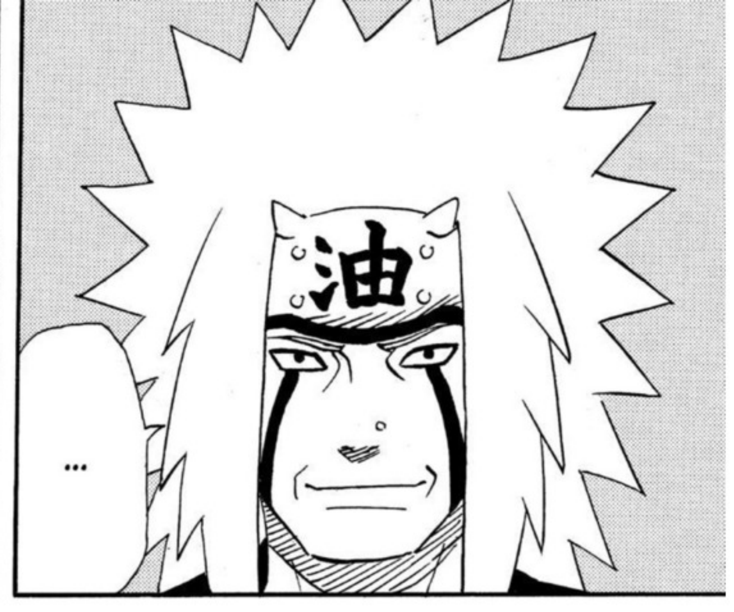

WELL, THEN.

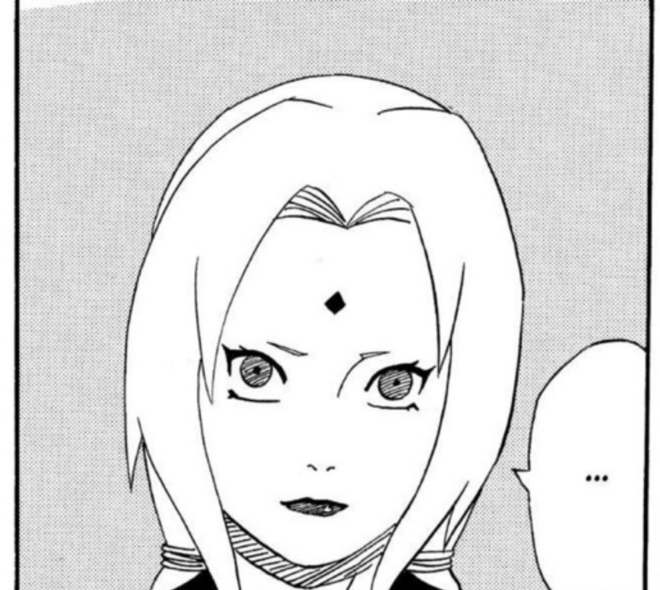

...HOO BOY...


...

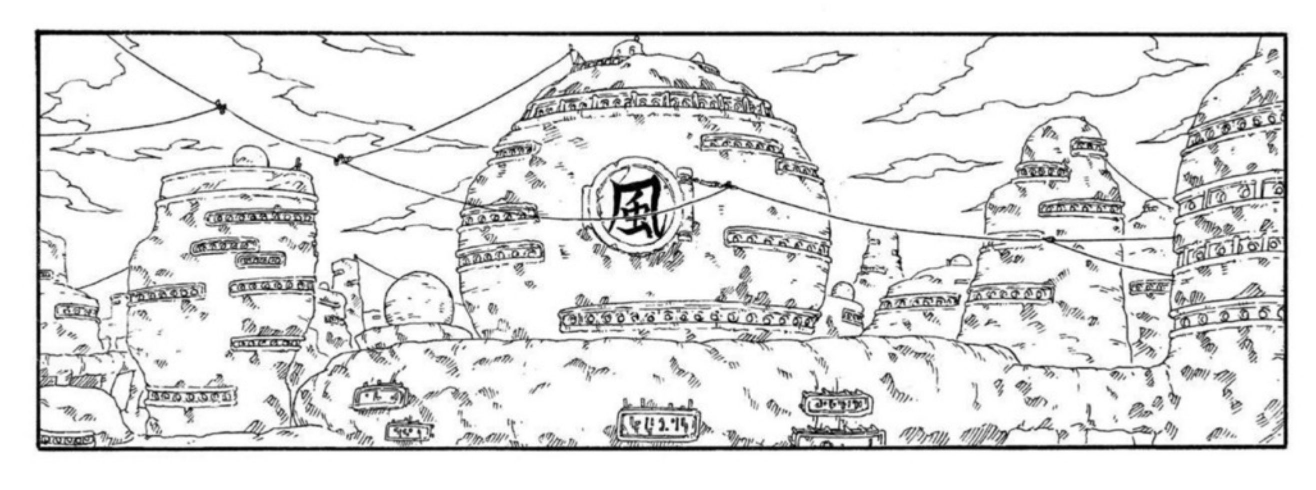

SHOOF
WORRIED...?

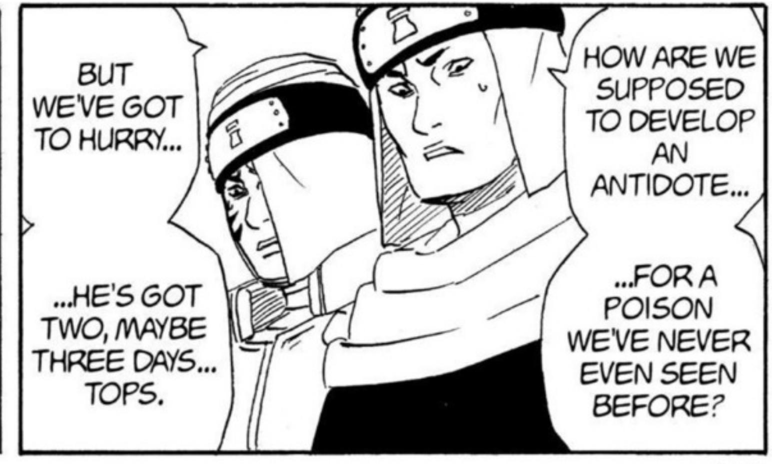

NAH... NOT ANY-MORE...
THEY'RE NO LONGER WEAK LITTLE SHINOBI...
...NEITHER HE NOR SAKURA...


...


...


GROWING UP...
...SURE IS A MYSTERIOUS THING.

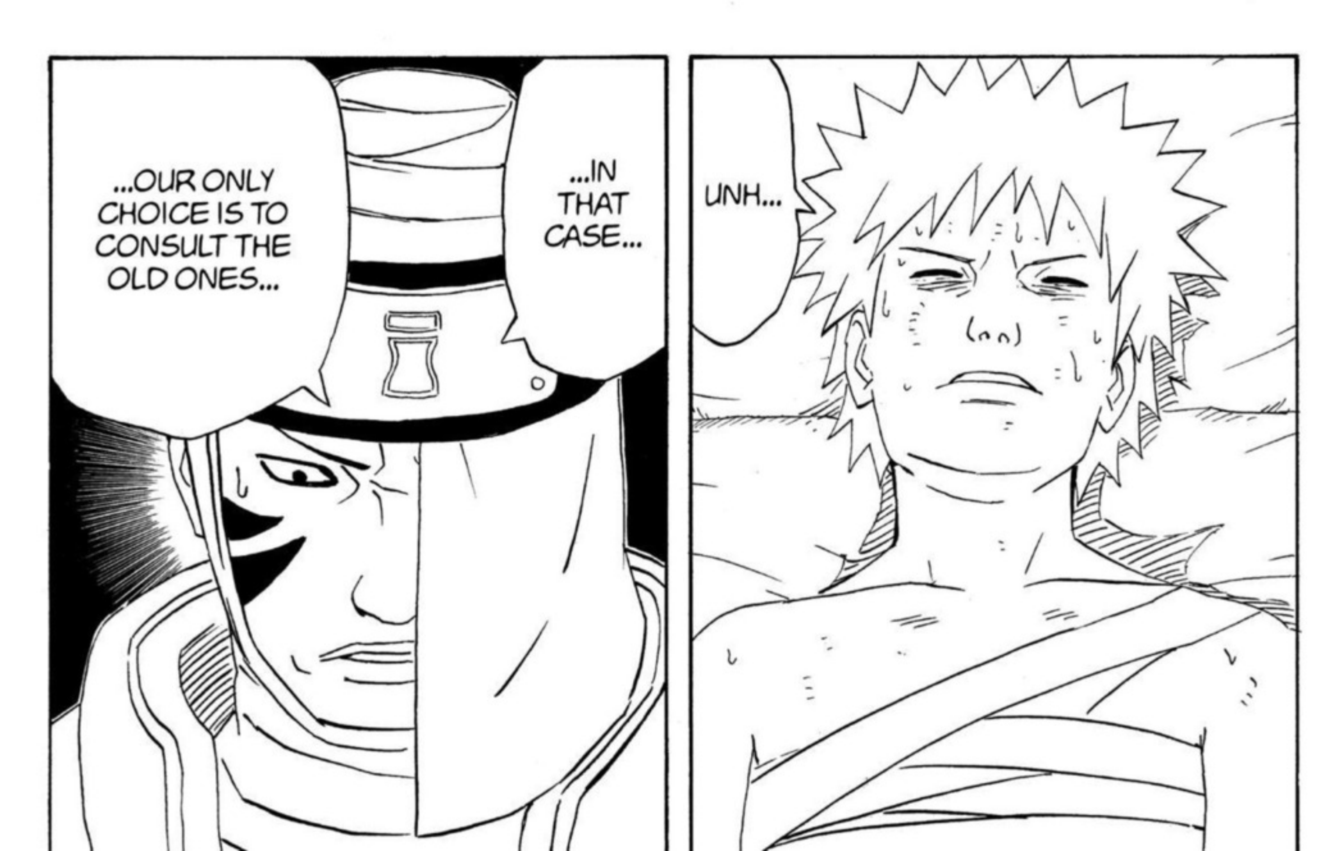


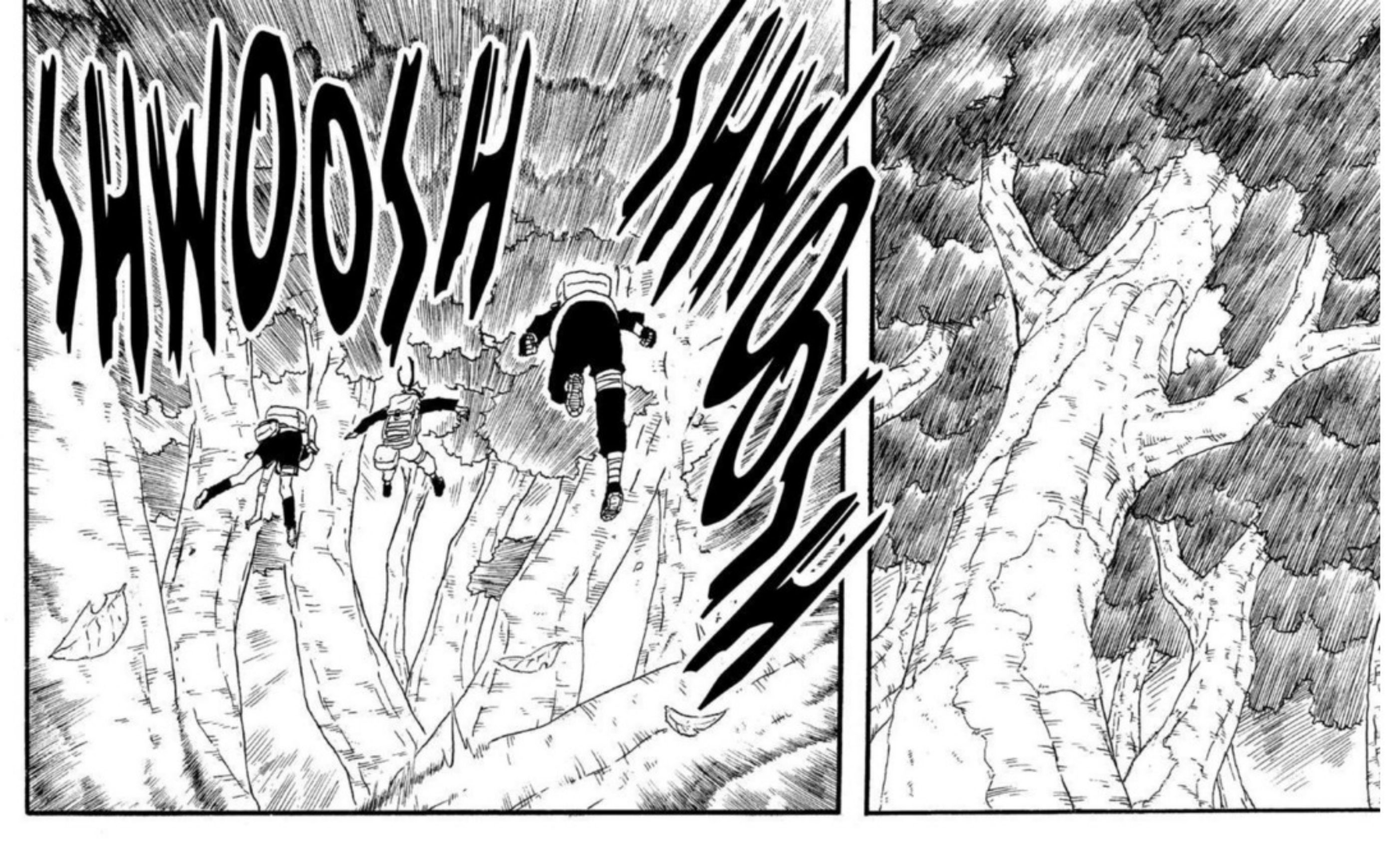

HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DEVELOP AN ANTIDOTE...
...FOR A POISON WE'VE NEVER EVEN SEEN BEFORE?
BUT WE'VE GOT TO HURRY...
...HE'S GOT TWO, MAYBE THREE DAYS... TOPS.


FIRST GAARA...
...AND NOW KANKURO...?


READ THIS WAY

UGH... UH...


UNH...
...IN THAT CASE...
...OUR ONLY CHOICE IS TO CONSULT THE OLD ONES...

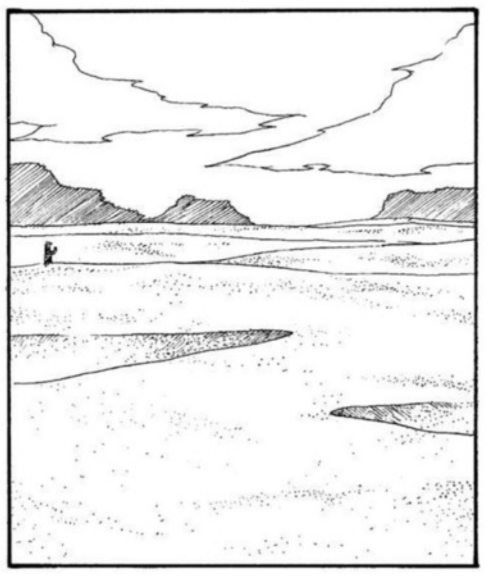

SHWOOSH
SHWOOSH

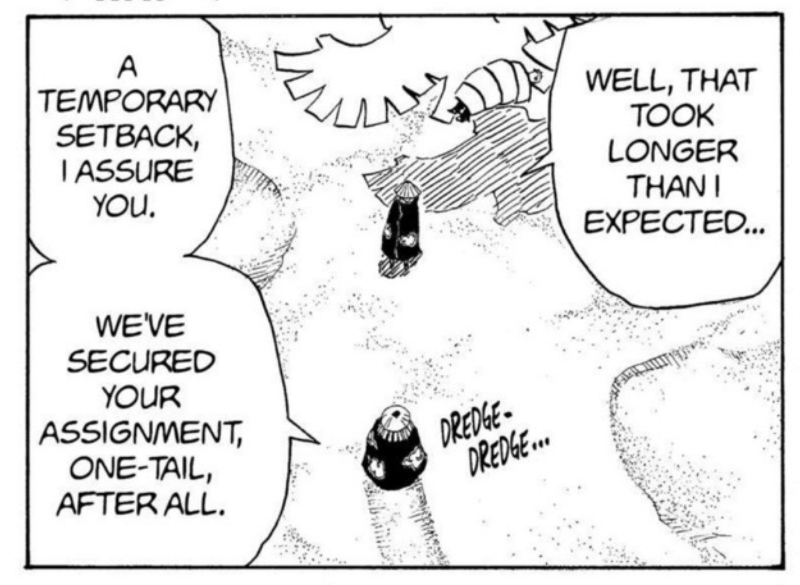
!


TEMARI!

?!


READ THIS WAY



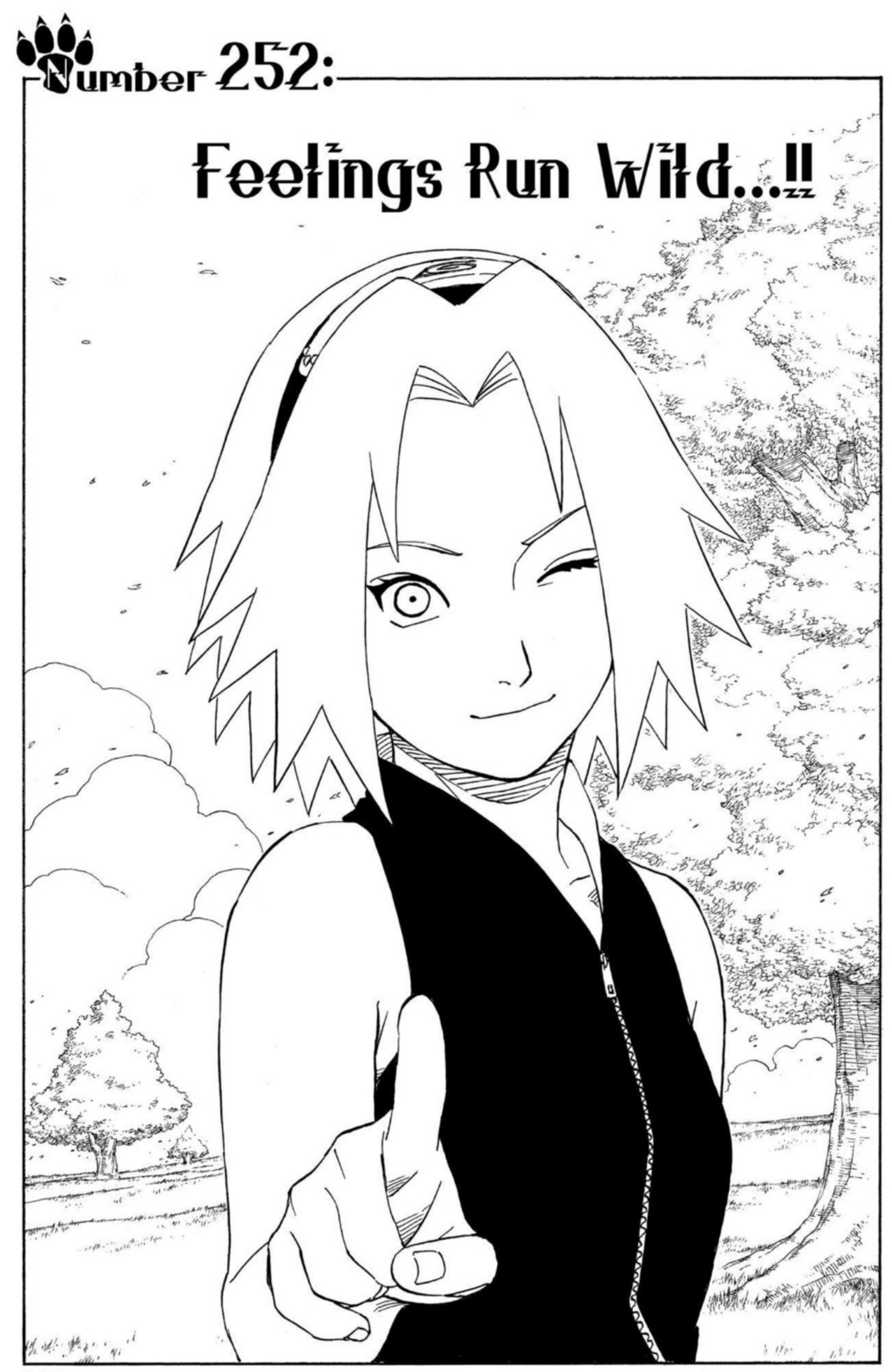

WELL, THAT TOOK LONGER THAN I EXPECTED...
A TEMPORARY SETBACK, I ASSURE YOU.
WE'VE SECURED YOUR ASSIGNMENT, ONE-TAIL, AFTER ALL.
DREDGE- DREDGE...


NOW ALL THAT'S LEFT IS *MY* ASSIGNMENT...
...BUT SINCE WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE IT IS YET...
OOO
FWH
I WISH IT WOULD JUST COME TO US.
WOULD CERTAINLY SAVE US THE TROUBLE...
BY THE WAY, WHAT KIND OF JINCHÛRIKI HOST IS YOURS, SASORI?


WHO KNOWS... AND WHO CARES?
AS LONG AS WE CATCH ONE, THEY CAN'T COMPLAIN... *WHICHEVER* ONE IT IS...


NARUTO

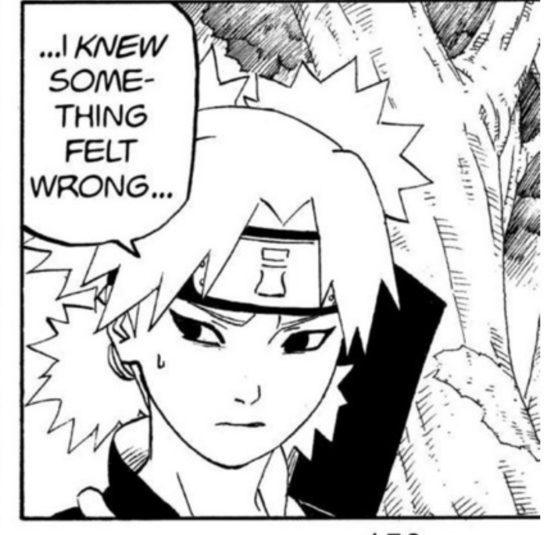
# Number 252: Feelings Run Wild...!!




WHAT ?!
GAARA ?!


...

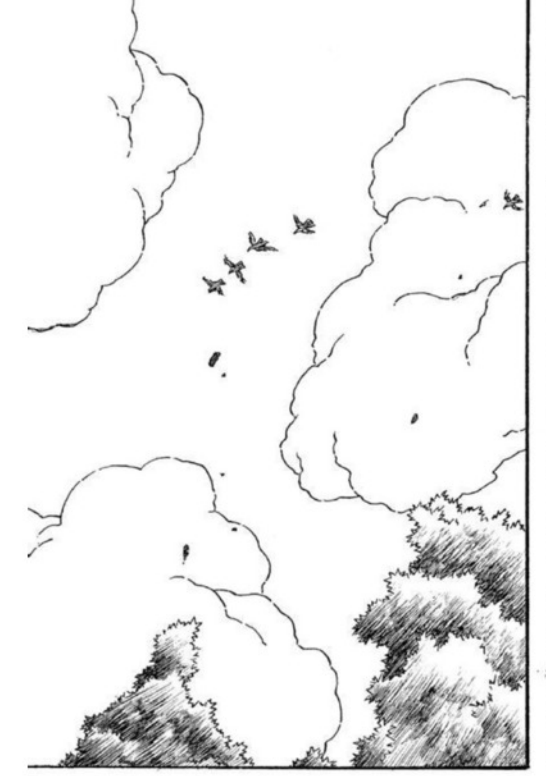

CRACK

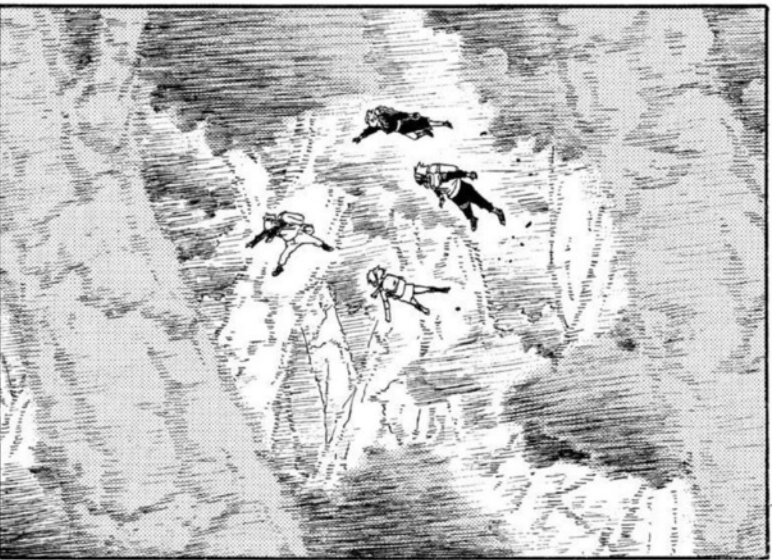

...I KNEW SOME-THING FELT WRONG...


...IT'S GOING TO TAKE THREE DAYS TO GET TO THE SAND...
...WE'D BETTER HURRY.


RIGHT! LET'S GO!
GRIND...

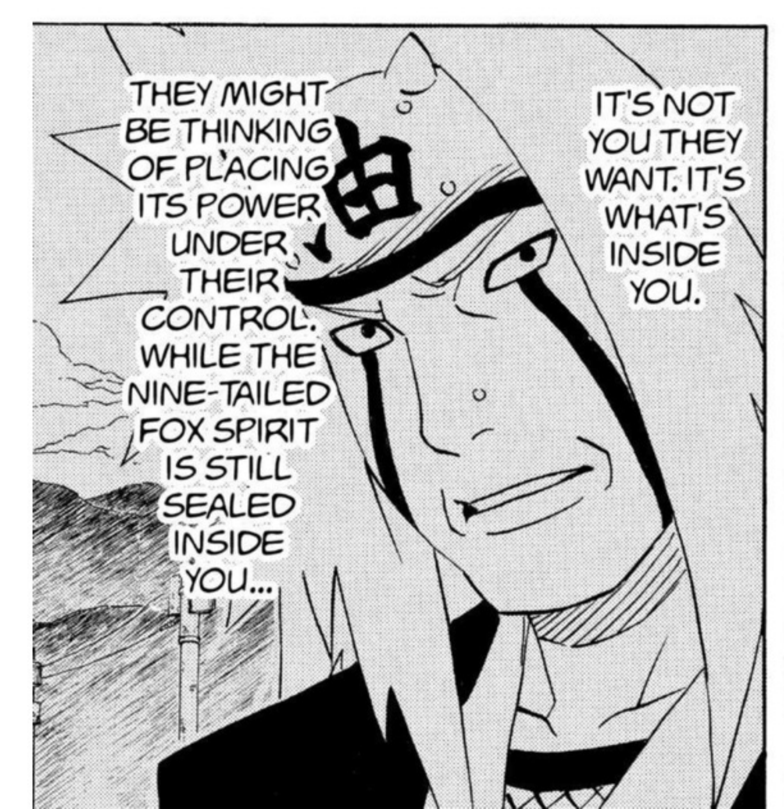

SHOOF






...


...TO TAKE NARUTO WITH US IS THE SUPREME ORDER GIVEN UNTO US BY THE AKATSUKI.


IT'S NOT YOU THEY WANT. IT'S WHAT'S INSIDE YOU.
THEY MIGHT BE THINKING OF PLACING ITS POWER UNDER THEIR CONTROL. WHILE THE NINE-TAILED FOX SPIRIT IS STILL SEALED INSIDE YOU...


SQUINCH


SLAM


VOOSH
!


NARUTO... NO MATTER HOW MUCH OF A RUSH WE'RE IN...
...WE CAN'T BREAK FORMATION.
CALM DOWN...
...DIDN'T LORD JIRAIYA JUST LECTURE YOU ABOUT YOUR TEMPER?


...
I HATE THIS!

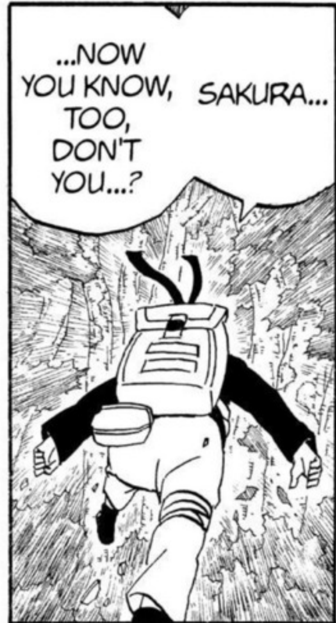

...


!


...!


READ
THIS
WAY


I KNOW *WHY* THOSE GUYS WANT GAARA AND ME...!


SAKURA...
...NOW YOU KNOW, TOO, DON'T YOU...?

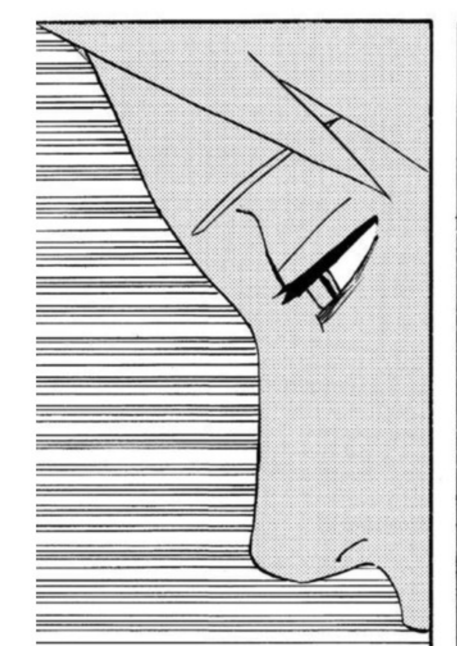

...!
...
...?!


I DON'T LIKE IT...!
...THE NINE-TAILED FOX SPIRIT SEALED INSIDE ME...


...?!


...


...



BOTH GAARA AND ME...

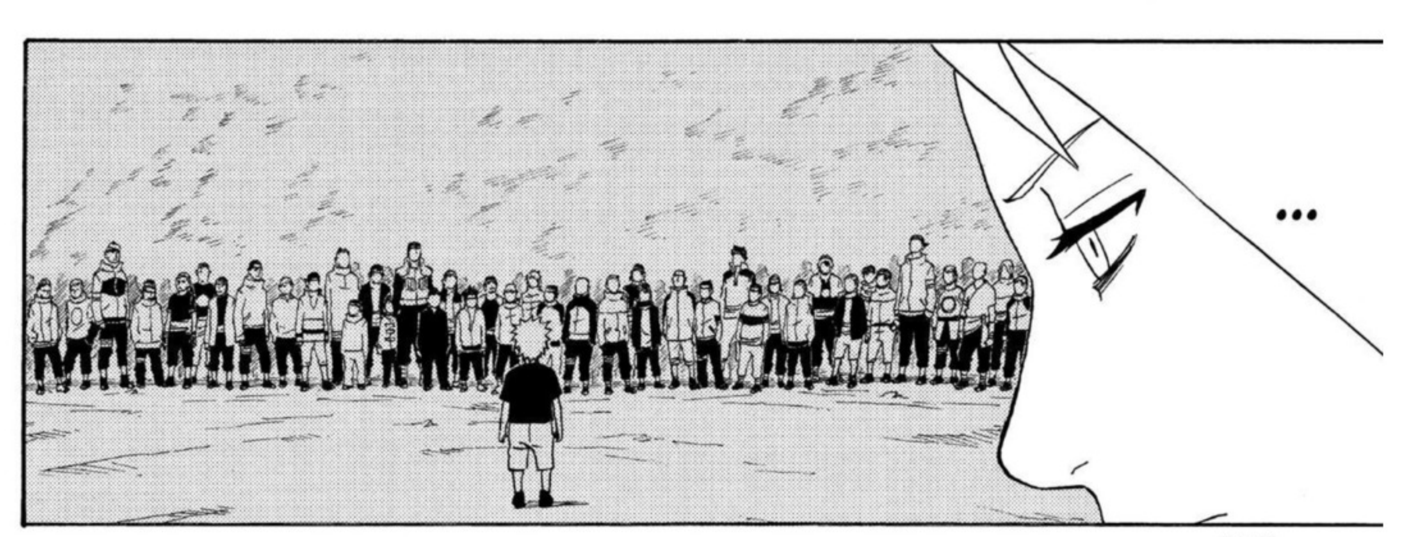
...WE'RE CARRYING MONSTERS INSIDE OUR BODIES...

...AND THAT'S WHAT THEY WANT! OUR MONSTERS!



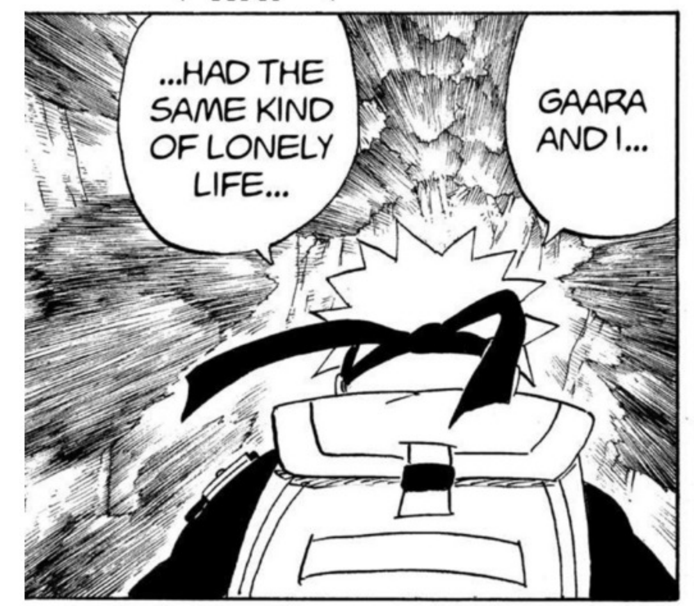


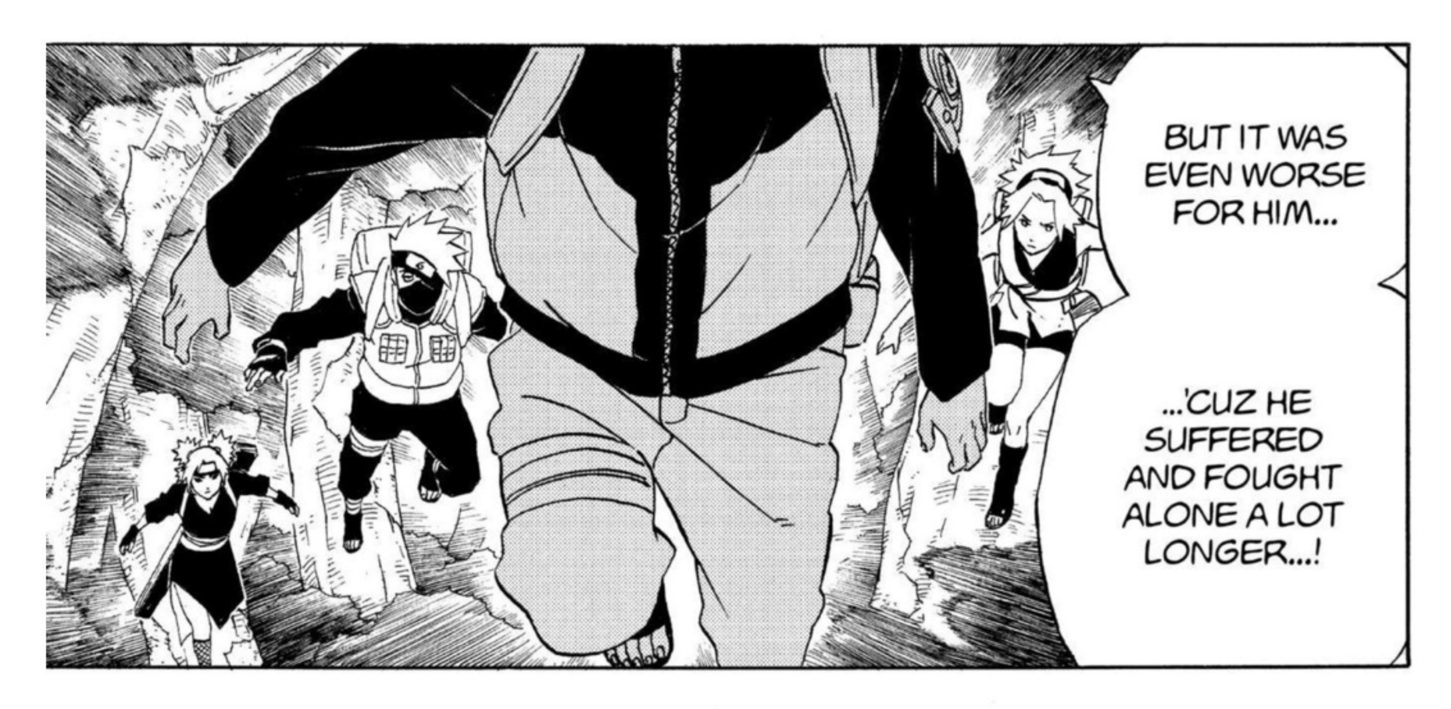





READ
THIS
WAY

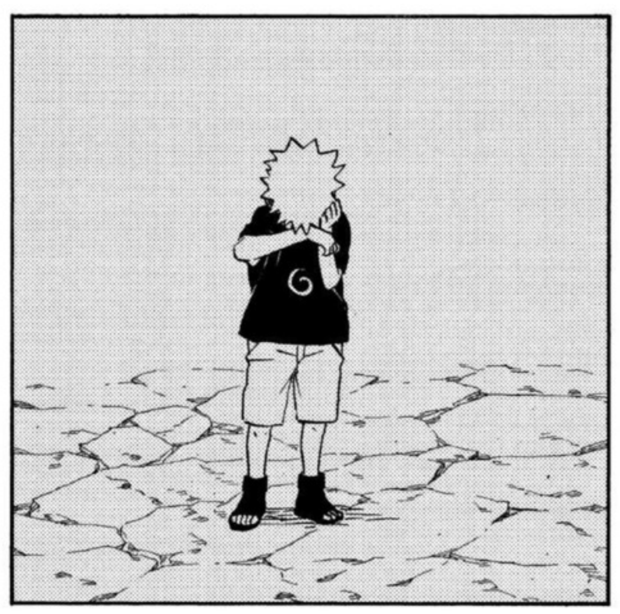

I WAS BORN A MONSTER!
A MONSTER, EH...? ACTUALLY... I'VE GOT ONE OF THOSE TOO.
...

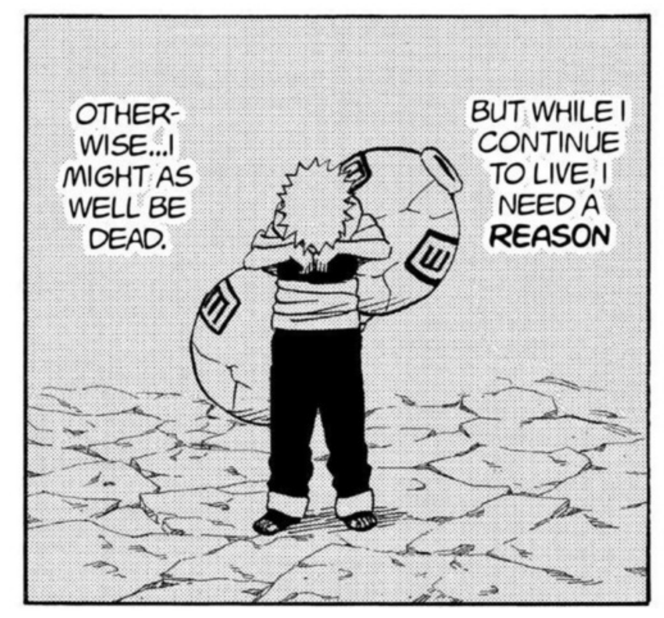

GAARA AND I...
...HAD THE SAME KIND OF LONELY LIFE...

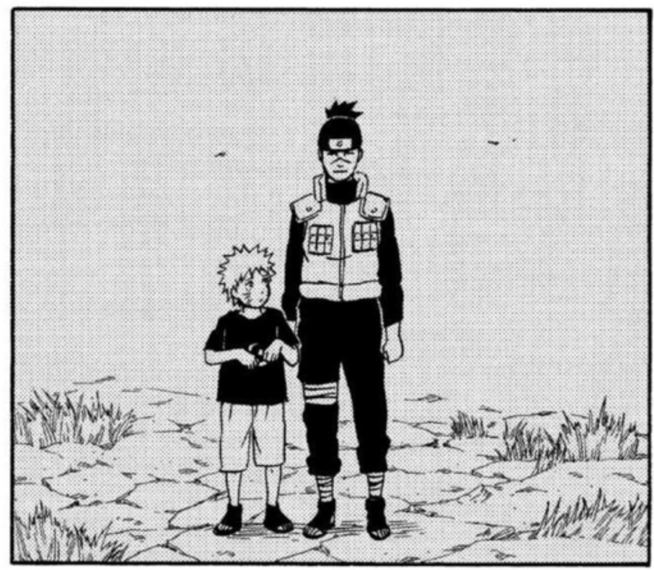

BUT IT WAS EVEN WORSE FOR HIM...
...'CUZ HE SUFFERED AND FOUGHT ALONE A LOT LONGER...!

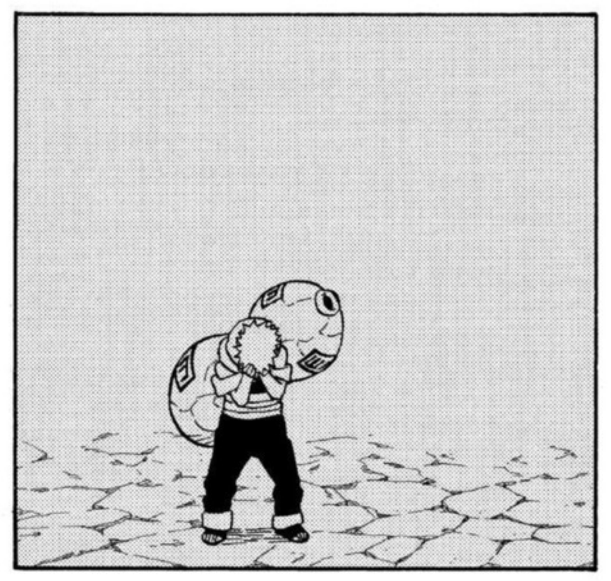

...


TO THEM, I AM NOW A RELIC OF THE PAST THAT THEY WISH TO ERASE AND FORGET.
SO...FOR WHAT PURPOSE DO I EXIST? WHY AM I ALIVE? AT FIRST, WHEN I ASKED MYSELF THAT, I HAD NO ANSWER.

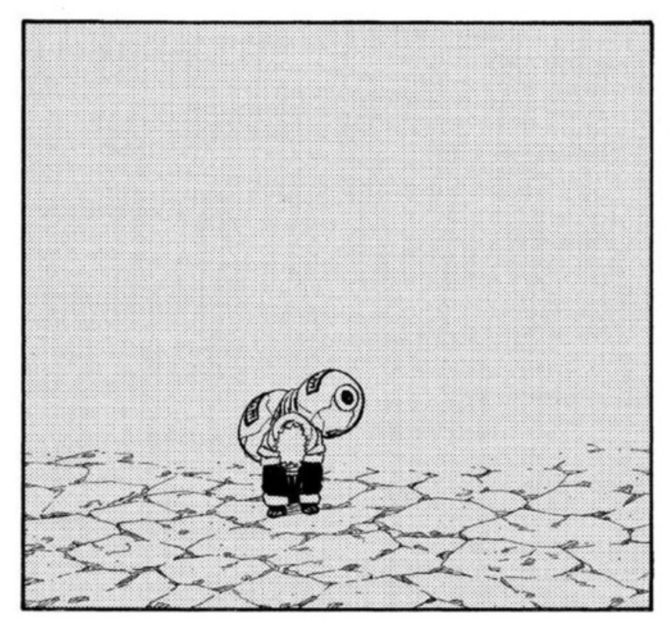



BUT WHILE I CONTINUE TO LIVE, I NEED A **REASON**
OTHER-WISE...I MIGHT AS WELL BE DEAD.









READ THIS WAY









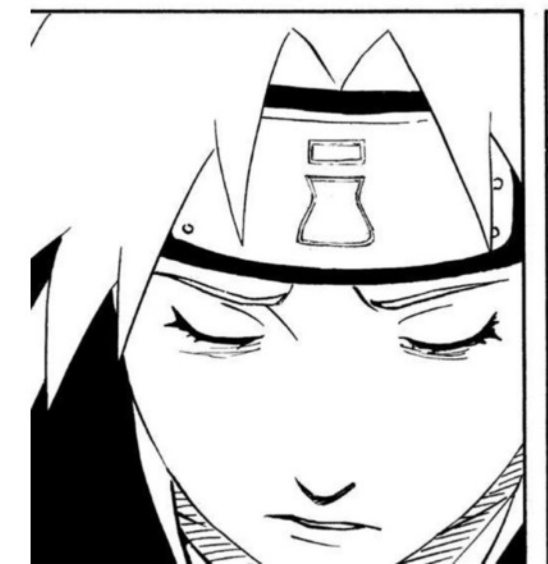




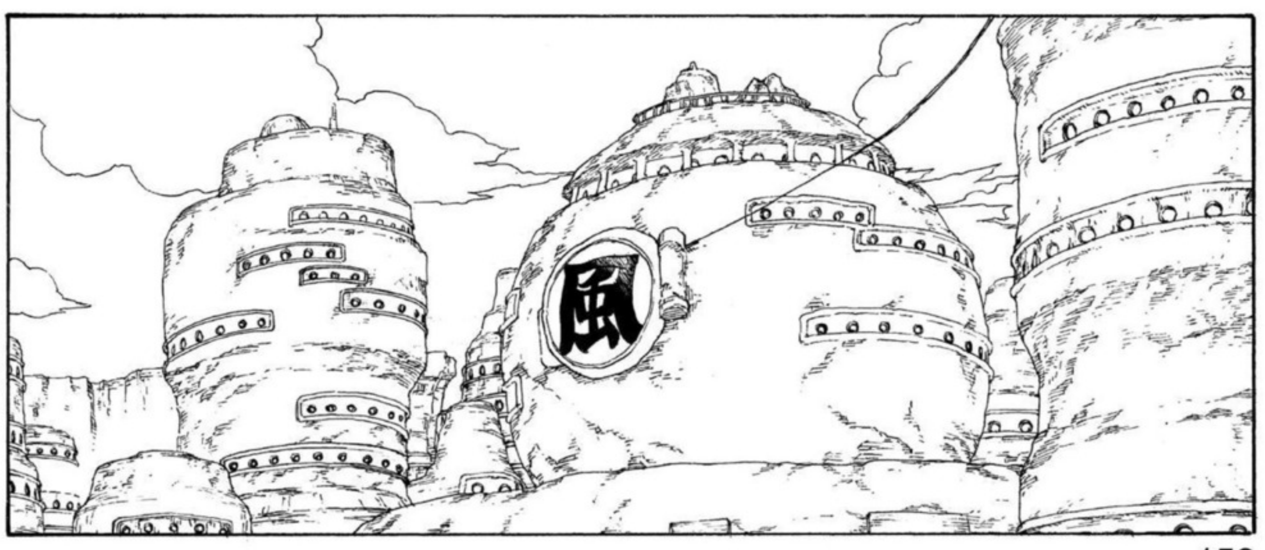




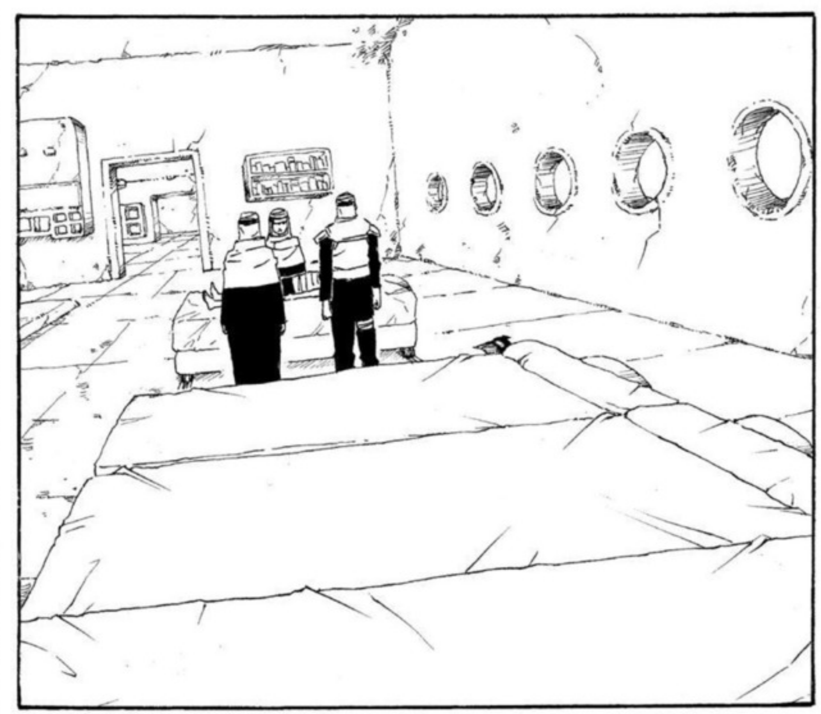




...THANK YOU...




READ
THIS
WAY




UNH...
...IT WAS HIM...

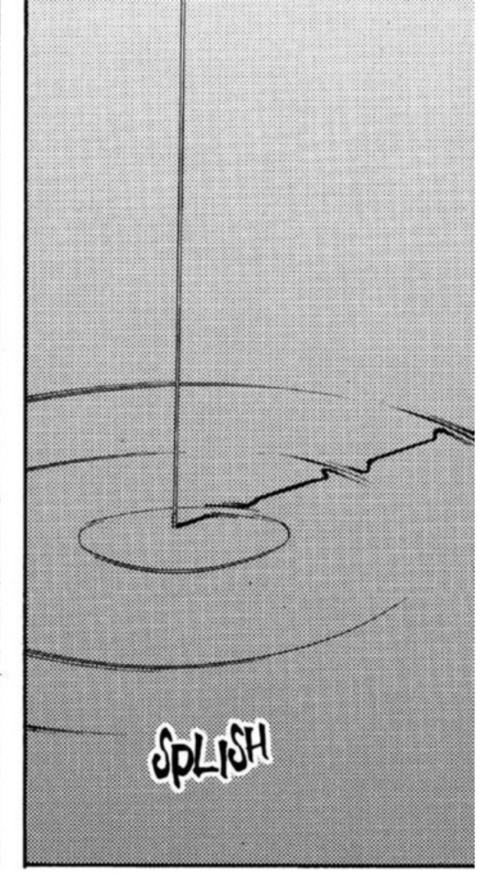

!
...KANKURO...!


HUNH


!

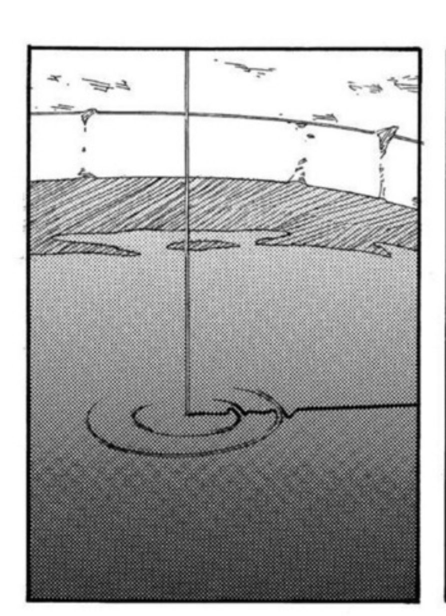

!
FHUP
...
!

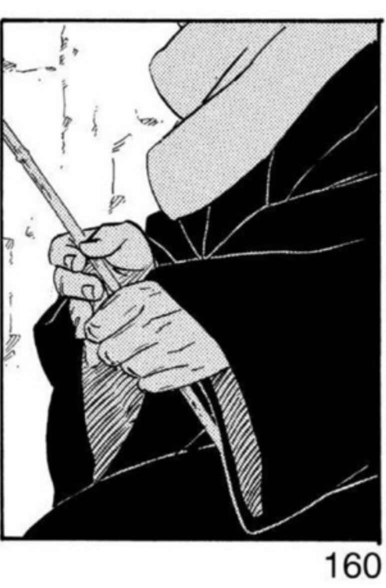

FLOP
FLOP


SPLISH


SIS...
HEY, SIS...!

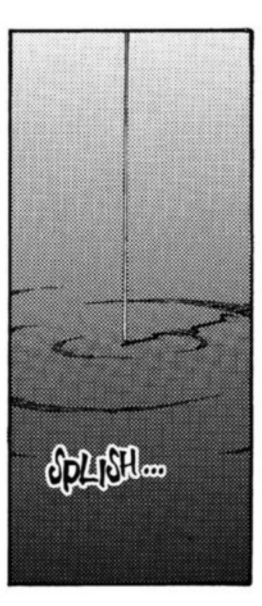






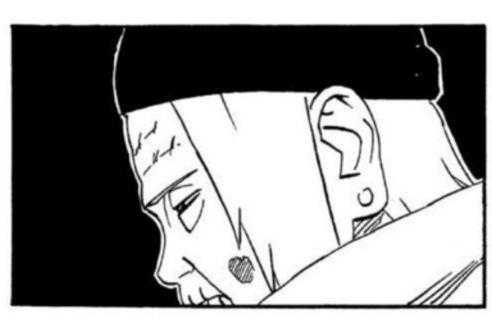

YOU DEAD...?


JUST KIDDING, PLAYING POSSUM!
TEE HEE HEE!


SPLISH...


...
CUT IT OUT, SIS...THAT WAS WAY TOO REAL.


CRUNCH



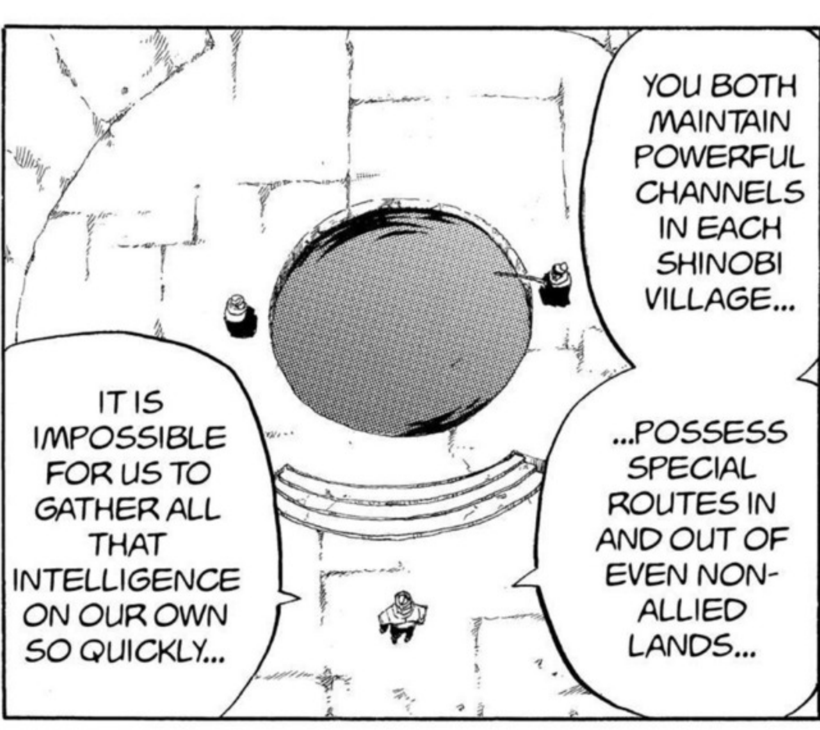

HONORED OLD ONES...
...I COME PLEADING FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE.




...LIKE ANCIENT TEXTS, WE TWO OUGHT TO BE BUNDLED TOGETHER AND LEFT TO COLLECT DUST ON SOME HIGH SHELF...
WHAT CAN THE LIKES OF US POSSIBLY DO, HERE AND NOW...?


AN ORGANIZATION CALLED THE AKATSUKI HAS TAKEN SHUKAKU HOSTAGE...
IF WE LET THEM GET AWAY WITH THIS, TERRIBLE THINGS ARE BOUND TO HAPPEN.

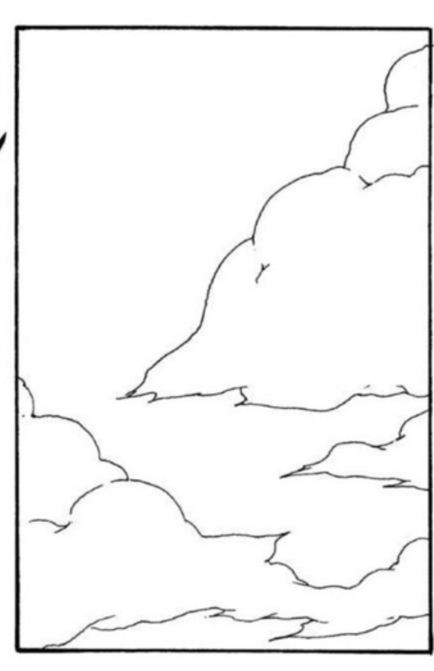

...THIS IS YOUR GENERATION'S PROBLEM.
YOU ALL TAKE CARE OF IT.

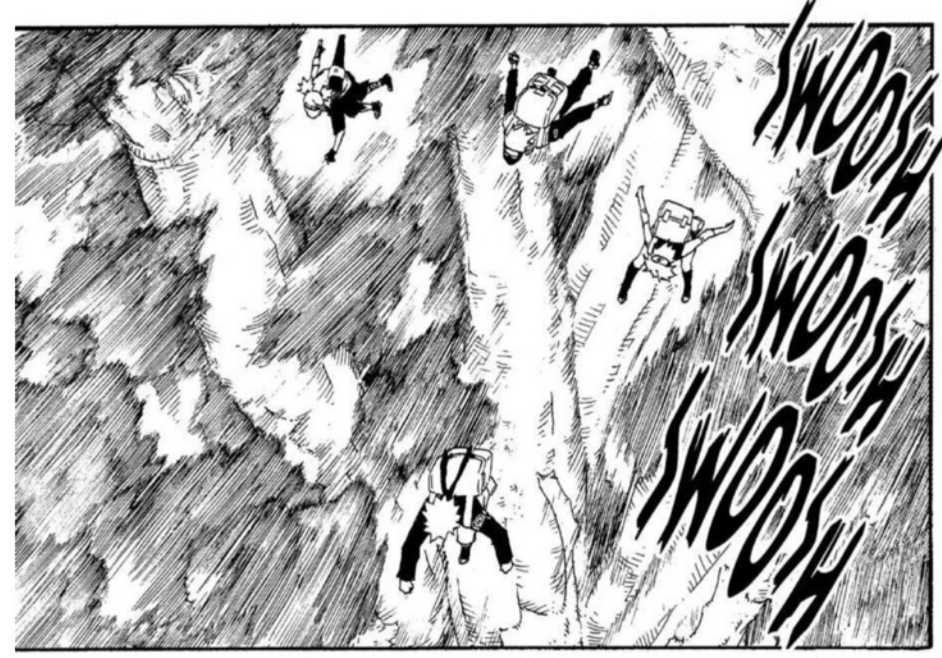

YOU BOTH MAINTAIN POWERFUL CHANNELS IN EACH SHINOBI VILLAGE...
...POSSESS SPECIAL ROUTES IN AND OUT OF EVEN NON-ALLIED LANDS...
IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO GATHER ALL THAT INTELLIGENCE ON OUR OWN SO QUICKLY...


BUT I'VE NO EARTHLY AMBITIONS LEFT.
IF ANYTHING, PERHAPS I'D LIKE TO SEE MY SWEET GRANDCHILD'S FACE ONE MORE TIME, BUT THAT'S ABOUT IT...
YOU KNOW, WE BOTH RETIRED A LONG TIME AGO.


WELL THEN, THAT'S PERFECT.

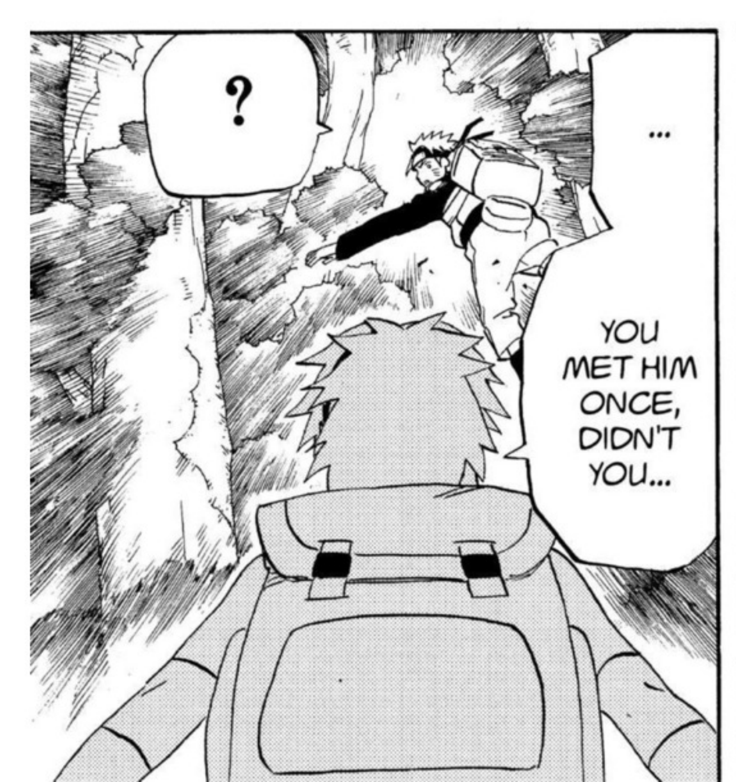

FOR YOUR GRANDSON JUST HAPPENS TO BE ONE OF THE AKATSUKI.




SWOOSH
SWOOSH
SWOOSH


NARUTO...

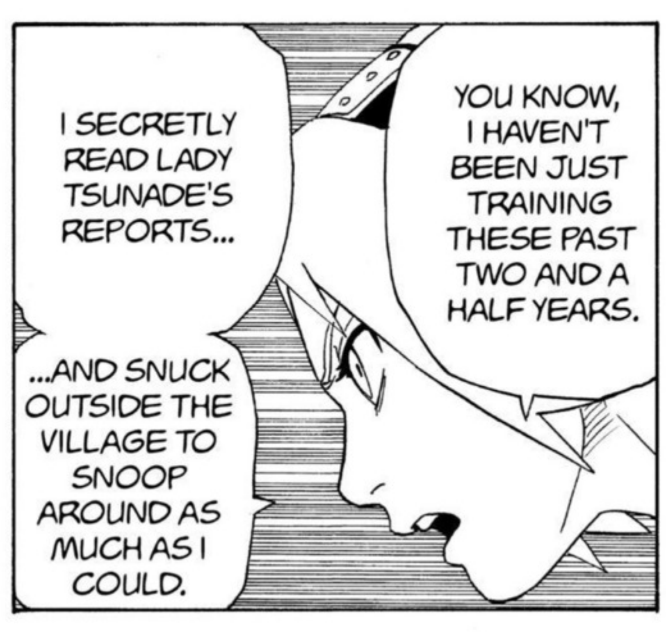

!


...
YOU MET HIM ONCE, DIDN'T YOU...
?

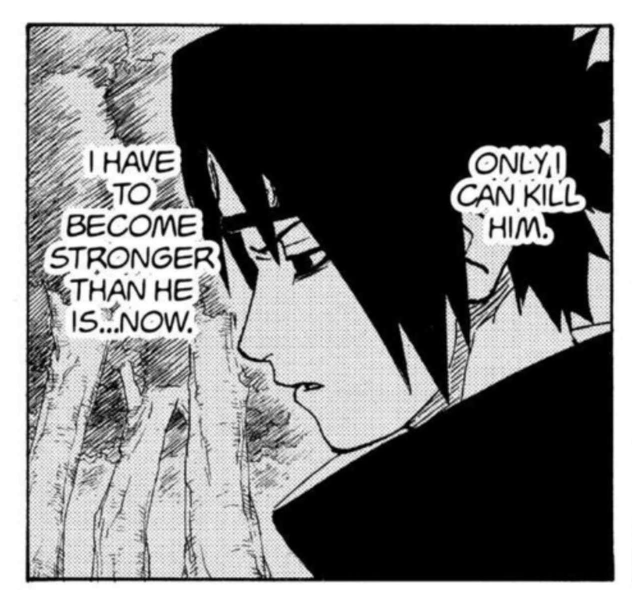

UCHIHA ITACHI...
...AND HE'S AFTER YOU.


...


!


YOU KNOW, I HAVEN'T BEEN JUST TRAINING THESE PAST TWO AND A HALF YEARS.
I SECRETLY READ LADY TSUNADE'S REPORTS...
...AND SNUCK OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE TO SNOOP AROUND AS MUCH AS I COULD.

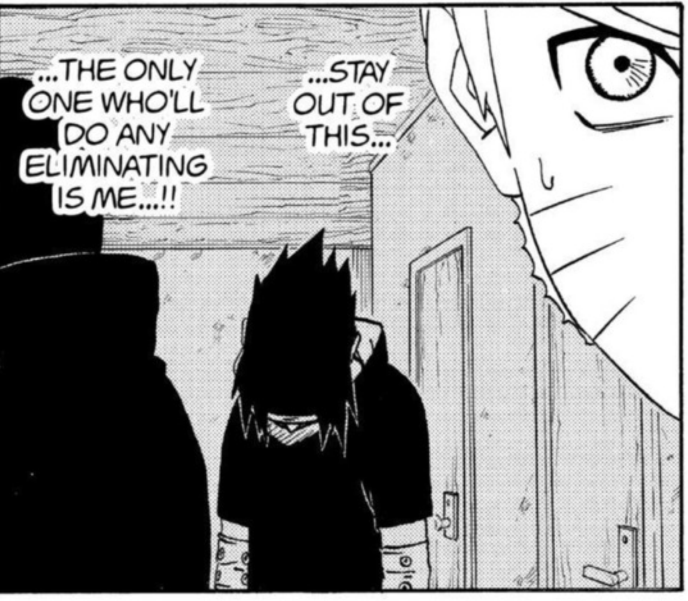

...BUT WHAT I DO HAVE IS DETERMINATION. I PLAN TO RESTORE MY CLAN. AND THERE'S SOMEONE I HAVE SWORN...
...TO KILL.


ONLY I CAN KILL HIM.
I HAVE TO BECOME STRONGER THAN HE IS...NOW.


READ THIS WAY

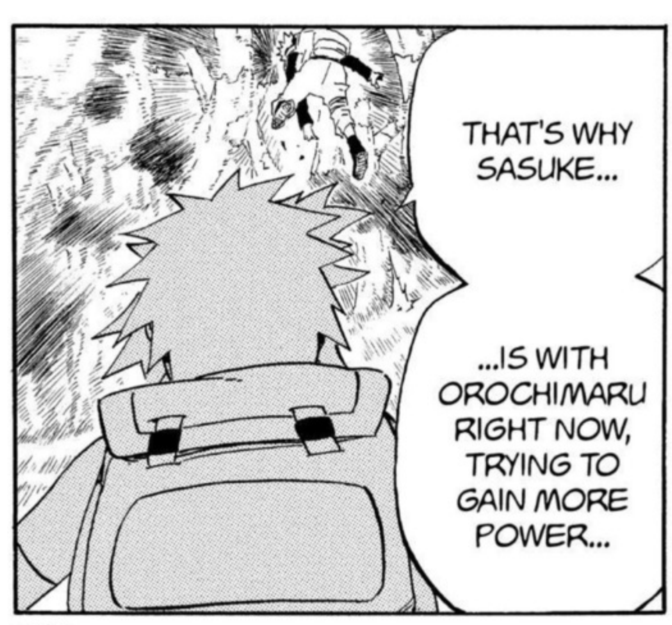

THE PERSON SASUKE KEEPS SAYING HE WANTS TO KILL...
...IS HIS OLDER BROTHER UCHIHA ITACHI, RIGHT...?
THE ONE THAT'S A MEMBER OF THE AKATSUKI...?


...!


...STAY OUT OF THIS...
...THE ONLY ONE WHO'LL DO ANY ELIMINATING IS ME...!!

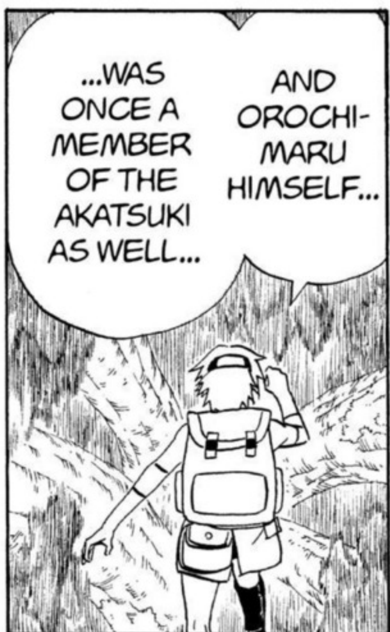

YOU REALLY ARE *HIS* BROTHER, AREN'T YOU?
YOU CAN SEE... THINGS WITH THOSE EYES THAT ITACHI HIMSELF NEVER DREAMED OF!


I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AGAIN, SASUKE...
...IN THE QUEST FOR POWER!


THAT'S WHY SASUKE...
...IS WITH OROCHIMARU RIGHT NOW, TRYING TO GAIN MORE POWER...

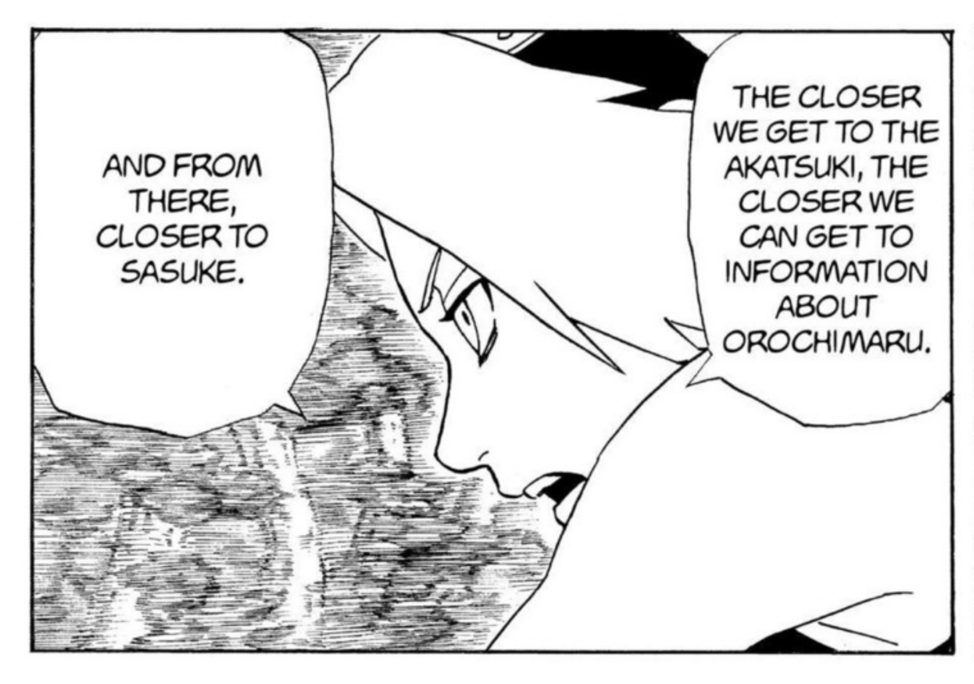

BUT OROCHIMARU WANTS SASUKE'S BODY, RIGHT?
AND WE ONLY HAVE ABOUT HALF A YEAR LEFT UNTIL HE CAN TRANSFER AGAIN...


SO SAKURA KNOWS ABOUT THAT, TOO...!
!!


AND OROCHIMARU HIMSELF...
...WAS ONCE A MEMBER OF THE AKATSUKI AS WELL...

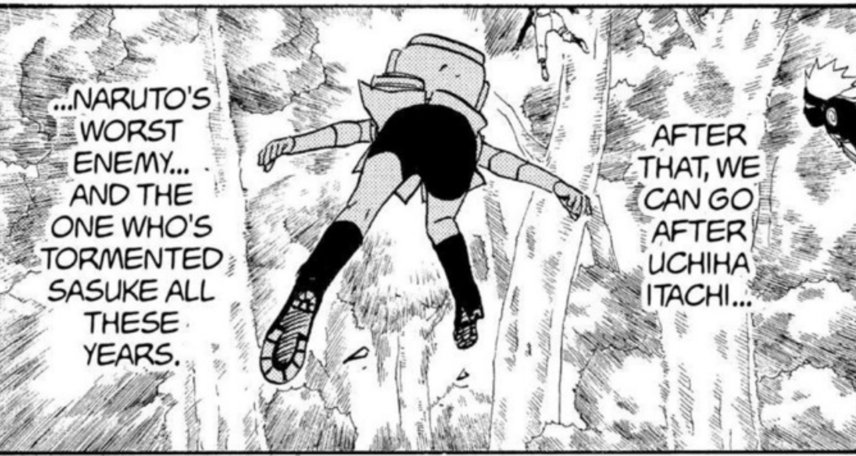

WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY...
...IS THIS.


?!

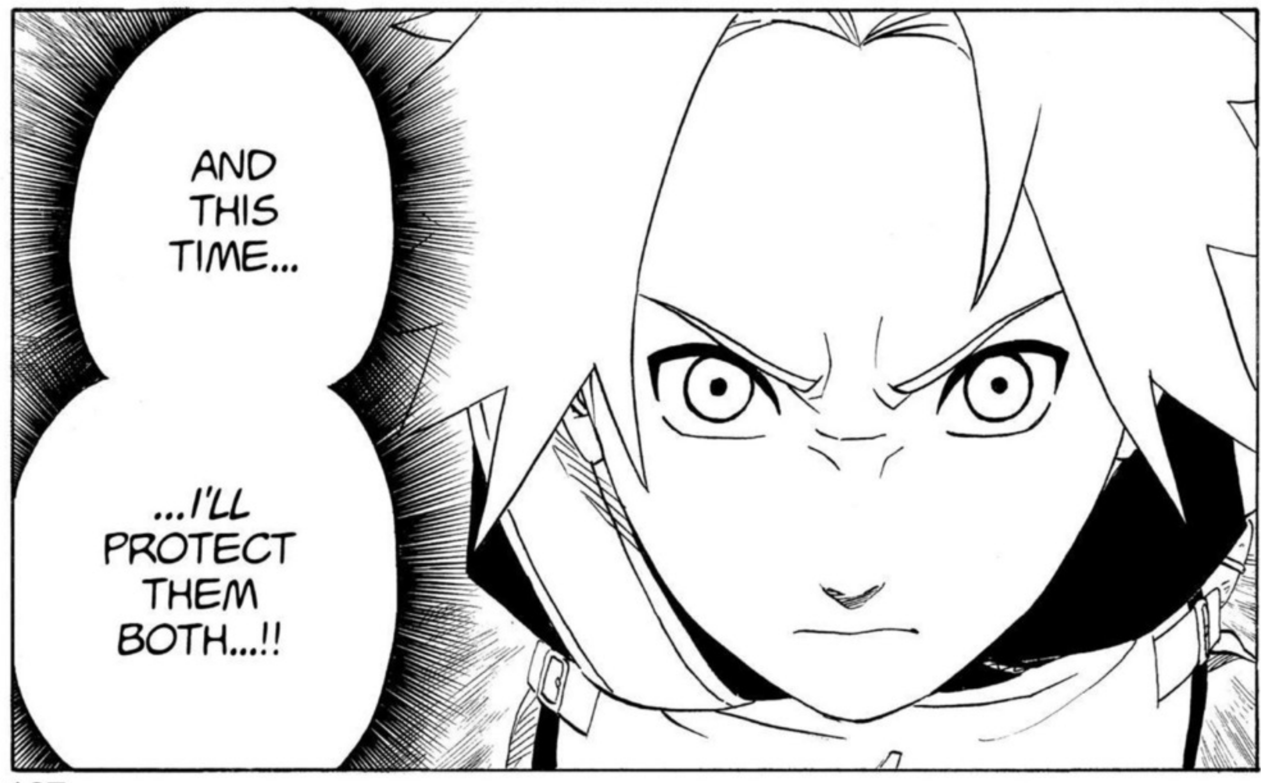

THE CLOSER WE GET TO THE AKATSUKI, THE CLOSER WE CAN GET TO INFORMATION ABOUT OROCHIMARU.
AND FROM THERE, CLOSER TO SASUKE.


TIME IS RUNNING OUT. WE'VE ONLY GOT HALF A YEAR LEFT TO FIND SASUKE...


YUP!


AFTER THAT, WE CAN GO AFTER UCHIHA ITACHI...
...NARUTO'S WORST ENEMY... AND THE ONE WHO'S TORMENTED SASUKE ALL THESE YEARS.

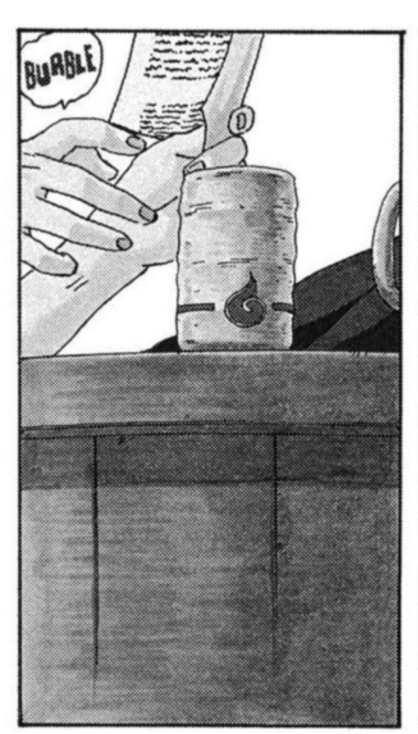

CLENCH


AND THIS TIME...
...I'LL PROTECT THEM BOTH...!!


NARUTO




# Number 253: Reinforcements...!!











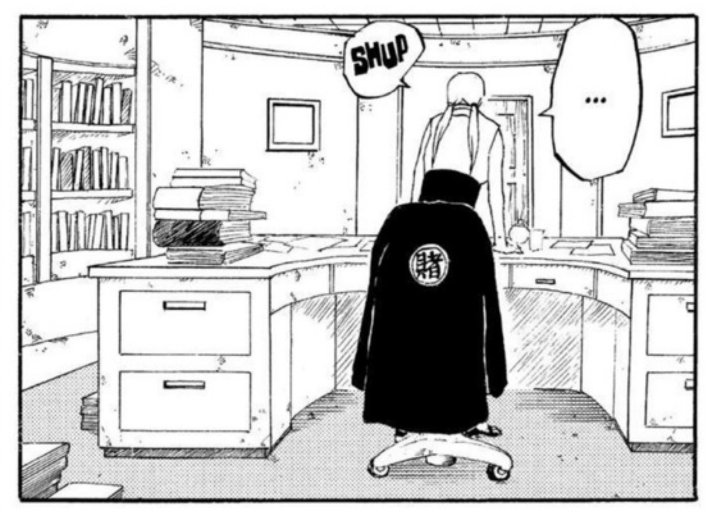


## Number 253: Reinforcements...!!


NARUTO
-ナルト-

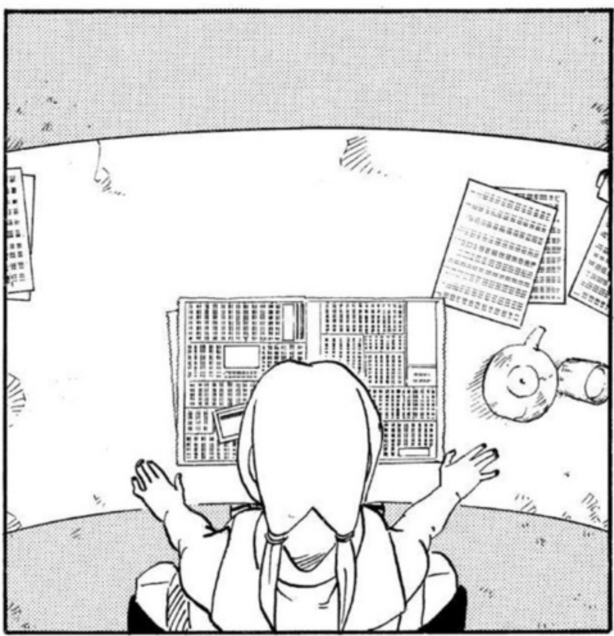










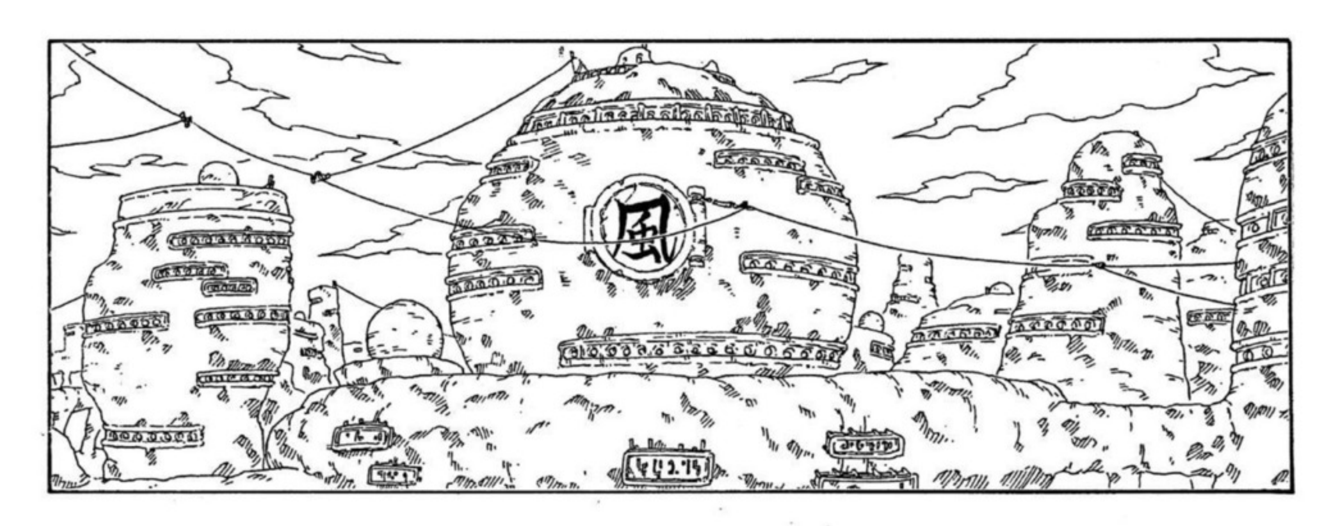


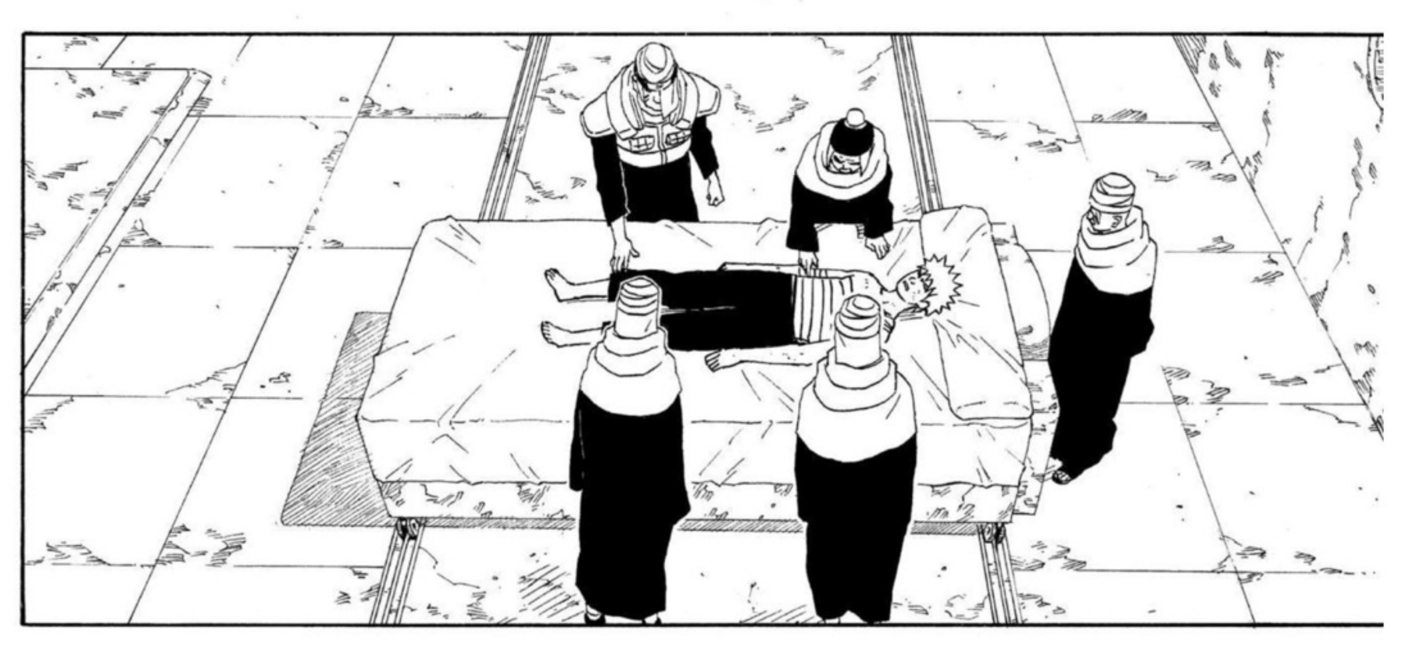




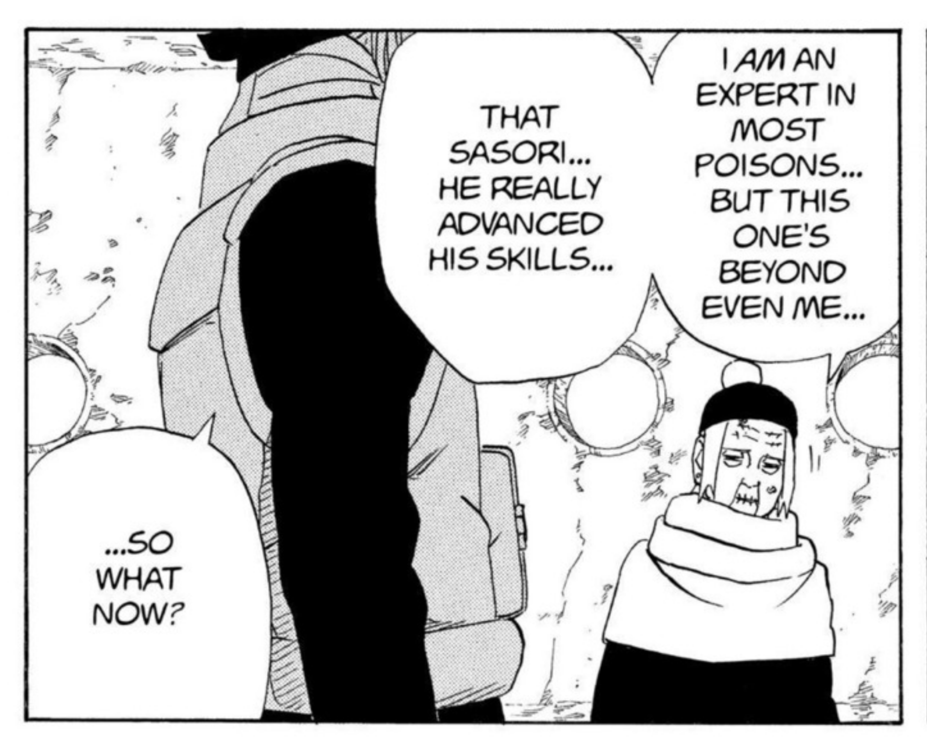



(Tsunade won the Lottery)

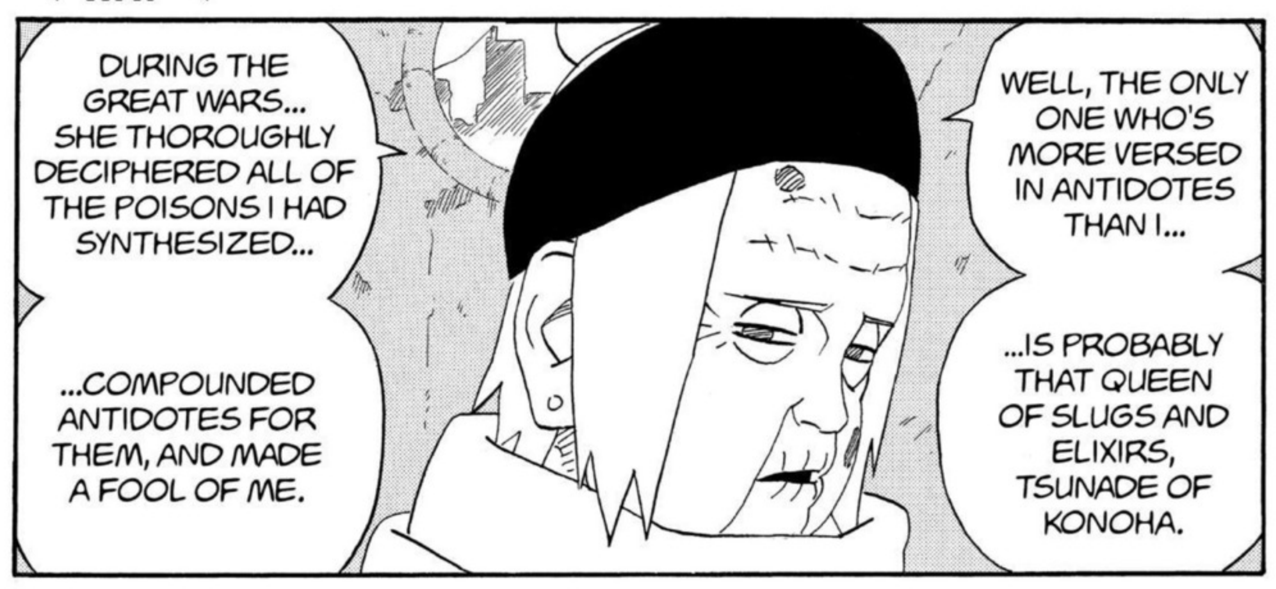





...


I AM AN EXPERT IN MOST POISONS... BUT THIS ONE'S BEYOND EVEN ME...
THAT SASORI... HE REALLY ADVANCED HIS SKILLS...
...SO WHAT NOW?


READ THIS WAY


WELL, THE ONLY ONE WHO'S MORE VERSED IN ANTIDOTES THAN I...
...IS PROBABLY THAT QUEEN OF SLUGS AND ELIXIRS, TSUNADE OF KONOHA.
DURING THE GREAT WARS... SHE THOROUGHLY DECIPHERED ALL OF THE POISONS I HAD SYNTHESIZED...
...COMPOUNDED ANTIDOTES FOR THEM, AND MADE A FOOL OF ME.


YOU BETTER SUMMON HER RIGHT AWAY AND HAVE HER TAKE A LOOK.
YOU'RE ALLIES WITH KONOHA RIGHT NOW, AREN'T YOU...?


YES, BUT... SHE IS HERSELF HOKAGE ...
...SO I DO NOT THINK SHE CAN LEAVE HER VILLAGE SO CASUALLY.
EVEN IF SHE COULD COME, IT TAKES THREE DAYS TO GET TO SUNAGAKURE FROM KONOHA.
...AND BY THEN...

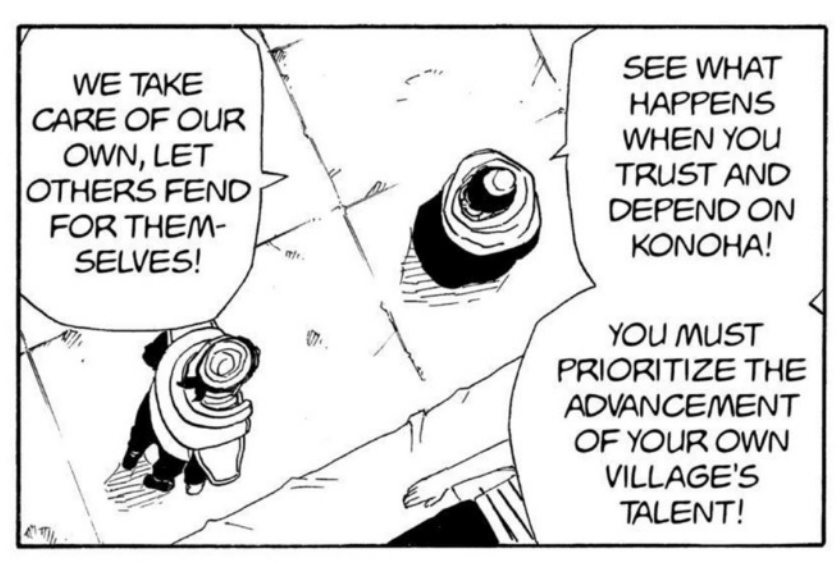

BESIDES, WE HAVE ALREADY REQUESTED KONOHA TO DISPATCH A SPECIALIST TEAM TO US.
ALL WE CAN DO NOW IS WAIT AND PRAY FOR THEIR TIMELY ARRIVAL...


...HUMPH. ALWAYS RELYING ON OTHERS ...!
YOUR SILLY INTERNATIONAL TREATIES HAVE DULLED YOUR EDGE...
...AND UNDERMINED ALL THAT WAS ONCE GREAT ABOUT THIS LAND!


DULLED...? HOW DARE YOU...?!


IT COULD NOT BE HELPED...
IT'S PARTLY HIS FAULT TOO, FOR LOSING HIS COOL AND OVER-EXTENDING HIMSELF...
...EVEN THOUGH HE IS A SHINOBI...


...

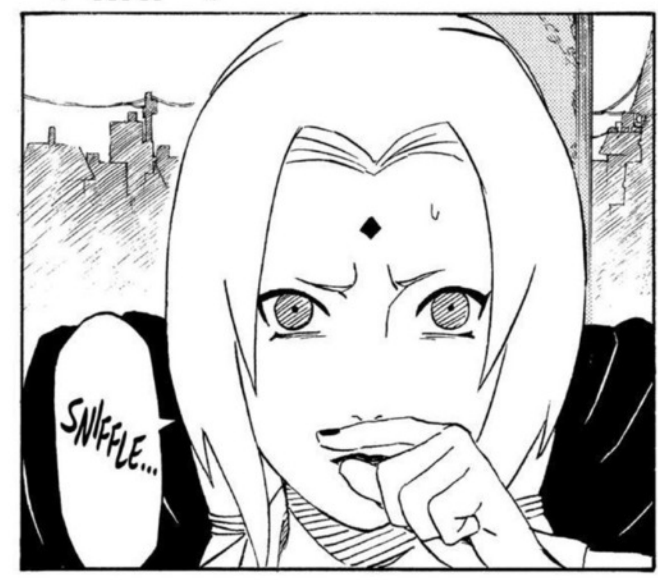

SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU TRUST AND DEPEND ON KONOHA!
YOU MUST PRIORITIZE THE ADVANCEMENT OF YOUR OWN VILLAGE'S TALENT!
WE TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN, LET OTHERS FEND FOR THEM-SELVES!


LISTEN... FRIENDLY ALLIANCES ARE FUNDAMENTALLY IMPOSSIBLE.
JUST YOU WATCH, THE MOST THEY'LL MANAGE TO SEND ARE SOME USELESS UNDERLINGS THAT ARE OUT OF FAVOR...


BESIDES...
...I *HATE* THAT SLUG LASS!


READ THIS WAY


ACHOO!

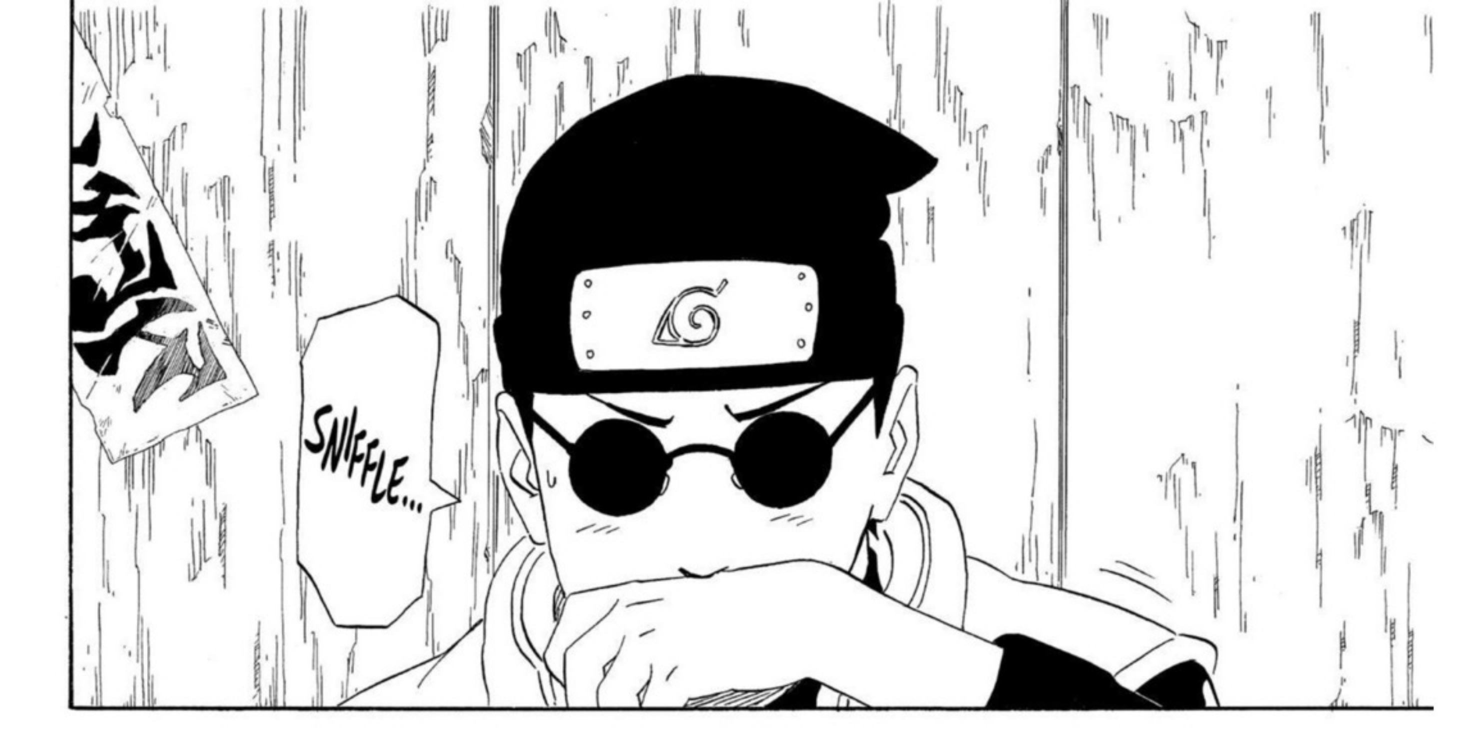

SNIFFLE...


ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, LADY TSUNADE?
YES...
BUT NEVER MIND ME. I WAS THINKING OF SENDING BACK-UP TROOPS TO THE SAND, BUT...

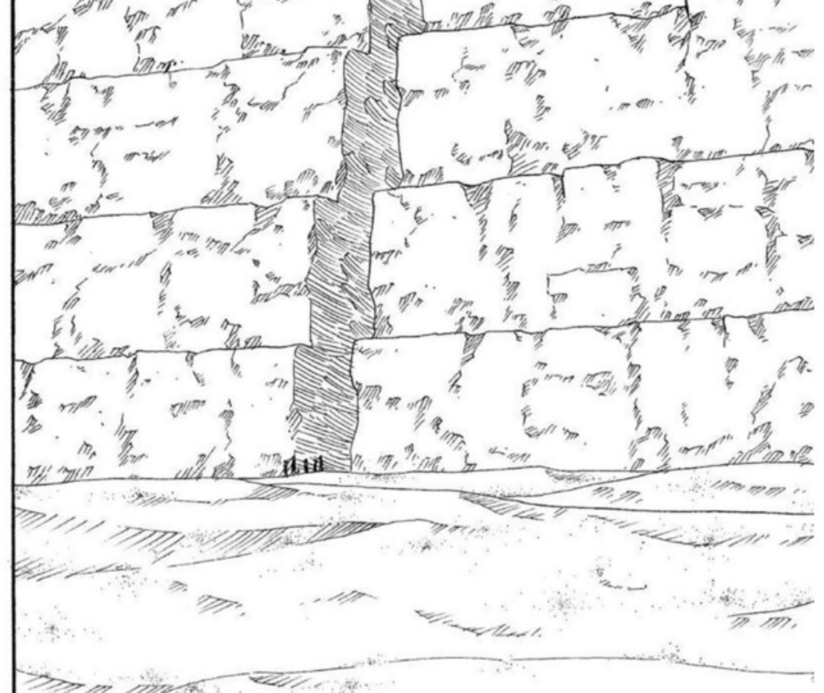

...ARE THEY STILL NOT READY?


IF YOU MEAN THEM... UM... ALMOST...


ACHOO!

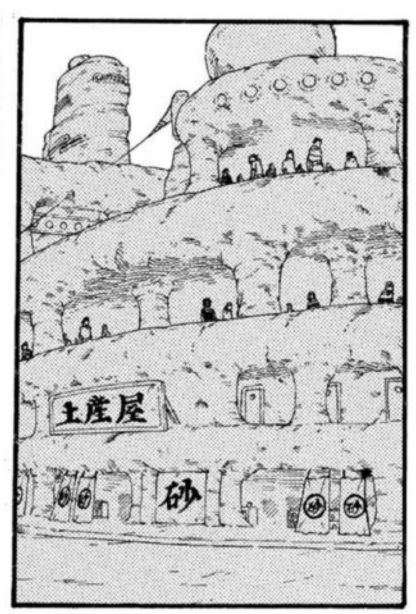

SNIFFLE...

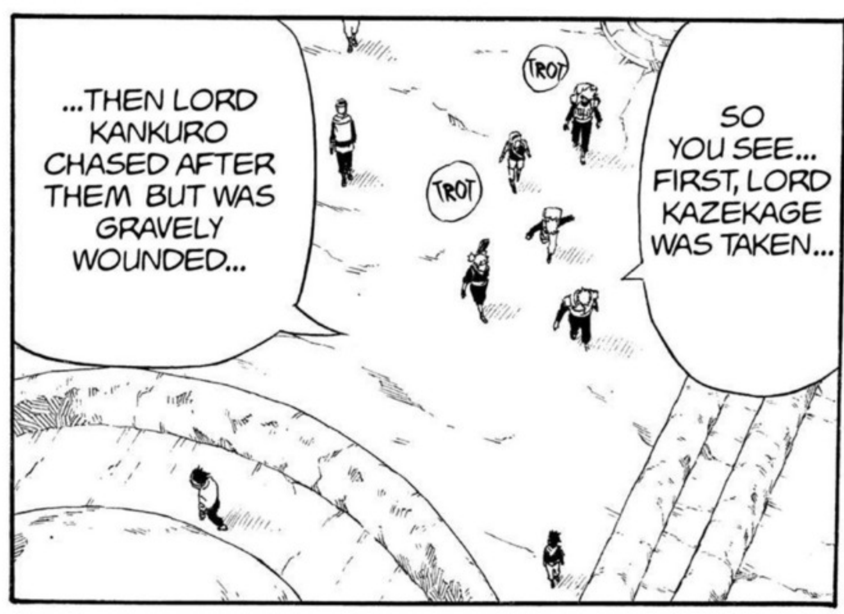

MASTER EBISU, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
WELL, I THINK I SOAKED IN THE HOT SPRING A LITTLE TOO LONG YESTERDAY.
BUT THIS IS OUR FIRST MISSION AS OFFICIAL SHINOBI! I HOPE YOU DIDN'T CATCH COLD PEEPING!
SUPER-PERV!




LADY TEMARI, YOU'RE HERE TOO...?
WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.
PLEASE, RIGHT THIS WAY!

OKAY!
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF







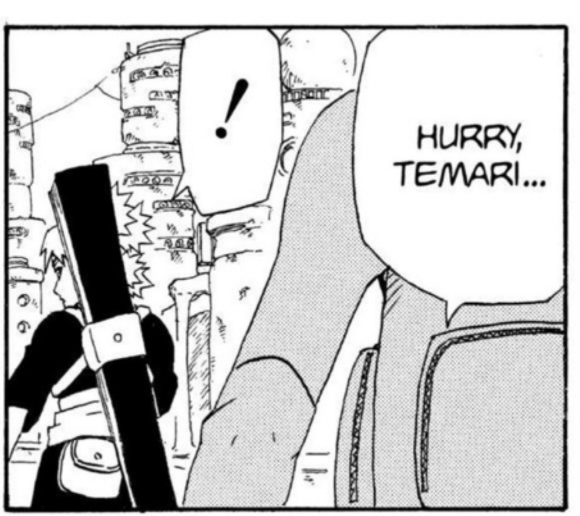



!!


GRRR
...


...


...
GAH...!


HURRY, TEMARI...
!

...I'LL EXAMINE HIM!







(Sign: Treatment Room 3)
















WHAP
WHAP
WHAP
TH


READ THIS WAY


?!


?!
?!

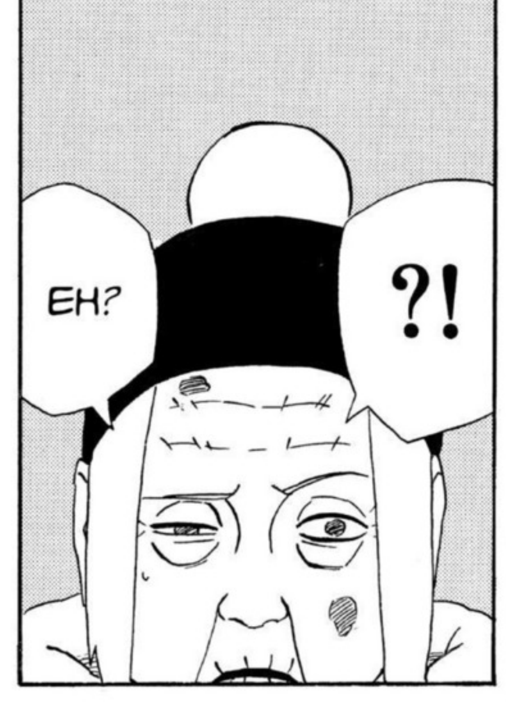

?!

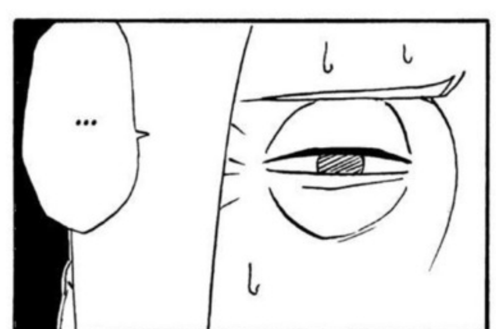

?!


SCREEECH
WHY ARE YOU ATTACKING MASTER KAKASHI?!
YOU SHRIVELED-UP PRUNE!!
BOOF
THIS OLD ONE... SHE'S GOOD!!


THAT DAY, HOW DARE YOU...!
DESPICABLE WHITE FANG OF KONOHA...!
FINALLY, TODAY... I SHALL COLLECT VENGEANCE FOR MY SON!
OH! NO, WAIT! I'M NOT...!
SILENCE!!


BLOCK
!
LOOK CLOSELY, SIS...
HE LOOKS JUST LIKE HIM, BUT THAT'S NOT WHITE FANG.

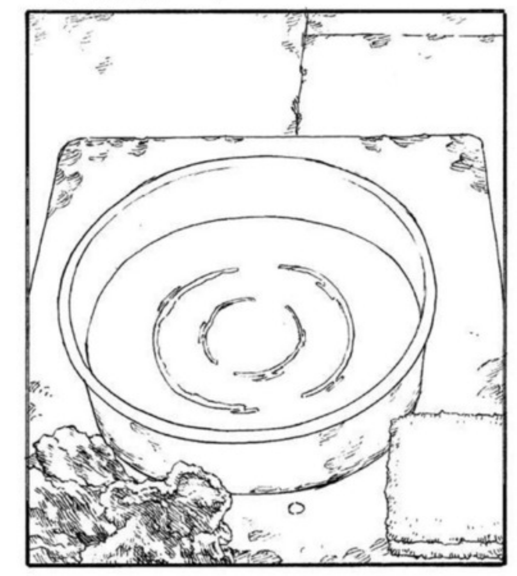

?!
EH?

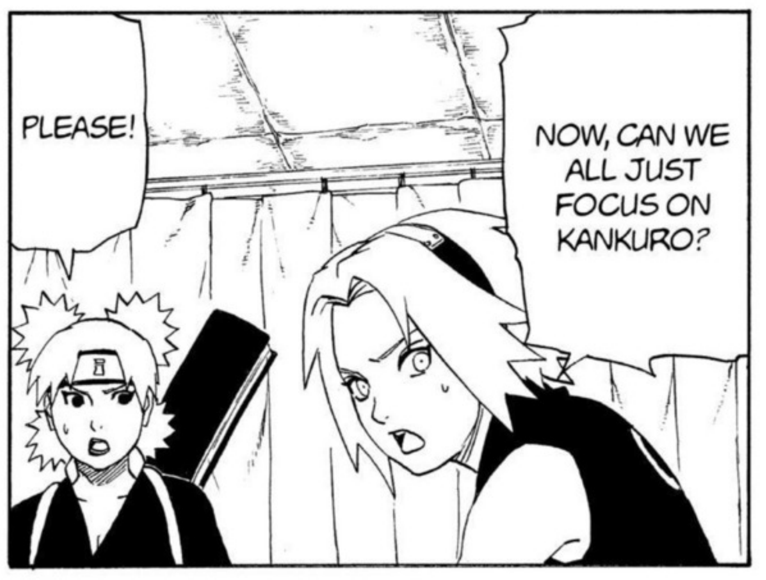

...


OH. WELL... NEVER MIND... TEE HEE HEE!
...


PHEW...


READ THIS WAY



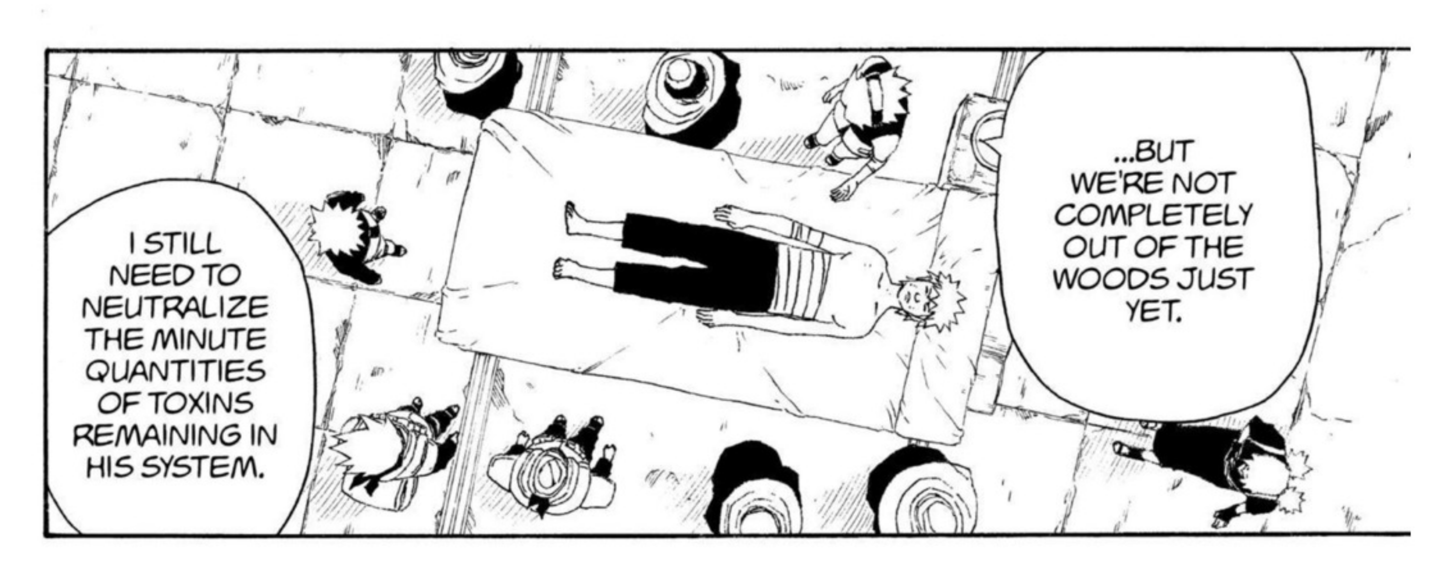

NOW, CAN WE ALL JUST FOCUS ON KANKURO?
PLEASE!

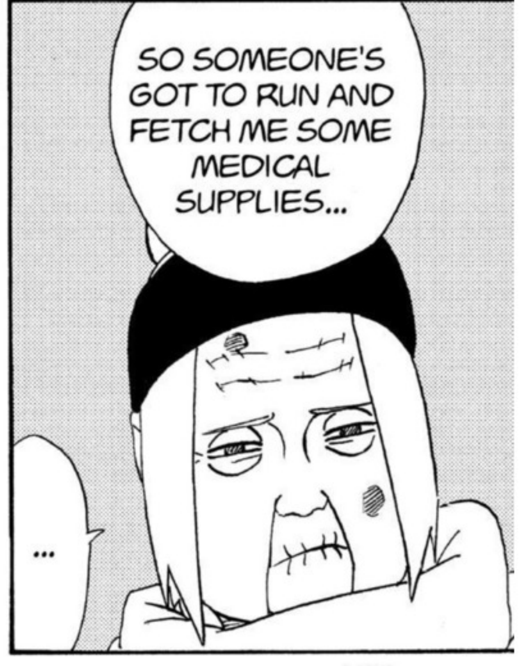
BLOOP...


WHUSH...
WAFT
WAFT
GOOD!


PHEW...
SCHWUMP...
THUMP

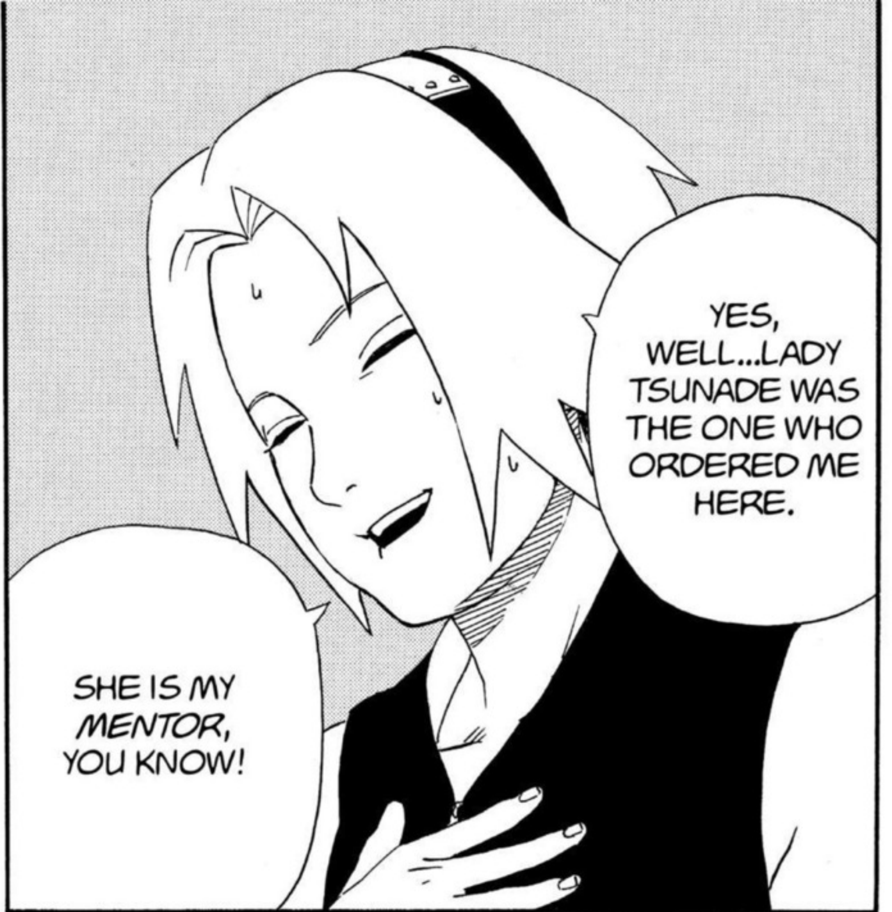

PHEW...
I'VE REMOVED MOST OF THE POISON.
SO THERE'S NO MORE IMMEDIATE DANGER...

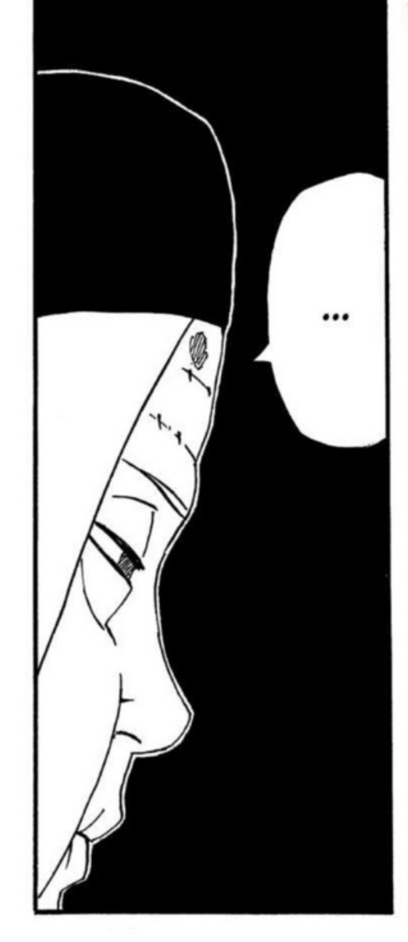

...BUT WE'RE NOT COMPLETELY OUT OF THE WOODS JUST YET.
I STILL NEED TO NEUTRALIZE THE MINUTE QUANTITIES OF TOXINS REMAINING IN HIS SYSTEM.

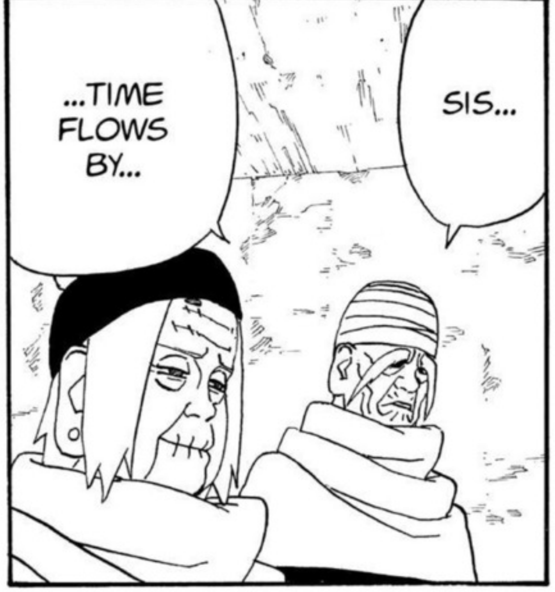

SO SOMEONE'S GOT TO RUN AND FETCH ME SOME MEDICAL SUPPLIES...
...


SAKURA...
...YOU'RE AWE-SOME...!


...YOU REMIND ME OF THAT SLUG LASS...
...I NEVER IMAGINED A GIRL LIKE YOU WOULD COME...

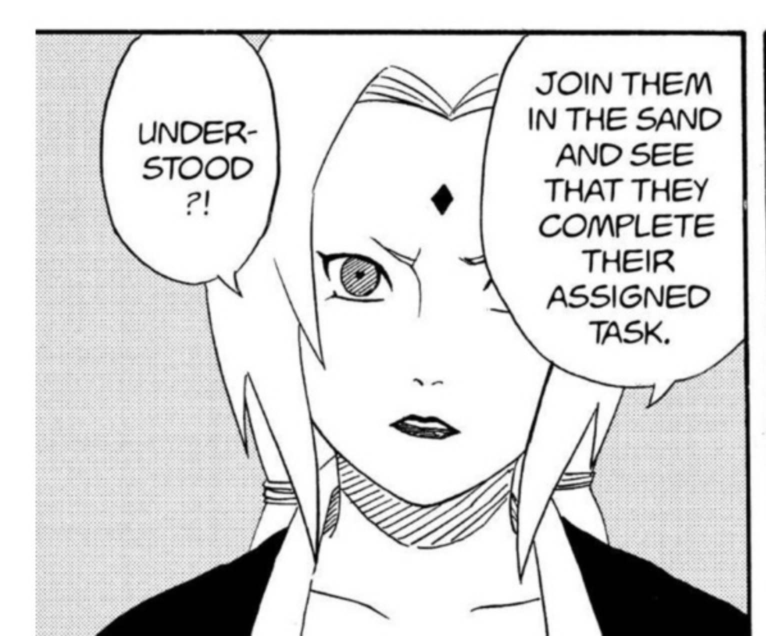

YES, WELL...LADY TSUNADE WAS THE ONE WHO ORDERED ME HERE.
SHE IS MY *MENTOR*, YOU KNOW!


...


SIS...
...TIME FLOWS BY...


ALL RIGHT! BUT WE CAN'T REST TOO LONG!
WE GOTTA GO AFTER THE AKATSUKI **NOW**!


I'M GIVING YOU...
...AN IDENTICAL MISSION AS TEAM KAKASHI.


JOIN THEM IN THE SAND AND SEE THAT THEY COMPLETE THEIR ASSIGNED TASK.
UNDER-STOOD?!







 TO BE CONTINUED IN *NARUTO* VOLUME 29!!